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MIKE SHAYNE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE



DECEMBER, 1969
VOL. 26, NO. 1

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL DIE IN SILENCE

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Money, women, gambling, fun—they were his way of life. And now they were his doom. Could Mike Shayne crack the grim riddle of the high flying playboy, who flew out a window to death!
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Die In Silence



by BRETT HALLIDAY

Dames, dough—they were his life. And right now they were his doom. Could Mike Shayne crack the grim riddle of the high flying playbody—who flew out a window to death?

IT WAS STILL early in the night in Miami, not yet midnight, and the busy night-life of the city was in full bloom.

The long sand bar that was Miami Beach sent a wild glow up into the narrow band of sky above its glitter. Under that glow the tinselled women, the eye-shadowed young girls, the old men with the money that replaced love and the glow of youth, the beach bums and the hungry youths all paraded to the constant din of noise that had no name.

A great island of light diffusing into the Florida sky to shut out the dark sea and darker swamps that surrounded the diamond of the city. And it was a diamond, not a rhinestone. There was more money here than ever seen by the whole population of other nations. Hot money and cold money, clean money and dirty money, new money and old money, all there for the quick eyes and quicker hands.

Because slowly and silently the prowlers stepped softly among the

A NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL



fun-seekers, the love-makers, the frantic. They moved easily, the prowlers. This was their world, their hunting ground. They lived here in the gaudy night; the others were only visitors.

So they revolved in the constant dance of fun: the revellers, the sellers and the prowlers. The night a wall of noise like a great dome over the city.

Until just a few minutes before midnight.

Then a single, agonized, lonely scream echoed to the far corners of the noise.

From a shining apartment building in Miami Beach, not two hundred yards from the mass of motion that was the main joy center, the scream fell down the night.

Long, slow, yet over in mere seconds.

One man, like a bird flying, clawing at the useless air, fell from the fifth floor of the apartment building to end his life and his joy broken on the street of Miami Beach.

The scream echoed as all the happy faces turned to look and, for one instant, know all that their frantic running would do them no good in the end.

One instant of a silent hole in the noise and light where the dead man lay.

One instant of quiet as the people looked.

Then, distant and coming nearer, the wail of a police siren drawing the sound back out of the night.

II

MICHAEL SHAYNE was sweating over his report to The Continental Insurance Company on an arson case he'd just completed, when Lucy Hamilton buzzed. Wearily, the red-head flipped his on switch.

"Is it important, Angel? I'm up to my eyes."

"A Miss Mercer to see you, Michael," the voice of his pert secretary said in her best business manner. "She says it's urgent."

"It always is, Angel," Shayne said. "Can she come back this afternoon? I've got to finish this report."

There was a silence and Lucy's low voice in the outer office as Shayne glared at the report. It was in triplicate, and when he had to make these reports he cursed the day he'd ever taken on Continental on retainer. When he got his retainer check, it usually looked better. But he hated paper work.

"Michael?" Lucy's crisp voice said from the intercom. "Miss Mercer says she could come back, but by then the trail could be cold, and the police have it all closed up."

"Police?" Shayne said, his thick red eyebrow going up in sudden interest. "What police, Angel?"

"Miami Beach," the brown-eyed girl said. "It seems to be a suicide or accident case, according to what Miss Mercer says Chief Painter decided."

Shayne's mouth curled in a wolfish grin. There was nothing he liked

better than locking horns with the dapper little Chief of Miami Beach detectives. He looked at the hated report, thought of some action against Peter Painter, and his wolf grin hardened into a smile.

"Shoo her in, Angel," Shayne said, and pushed the report aside. Let them wait.

The door opened and a woman came in. When he saw her, Shayne forgot the report all together.

"Mr. Shayne? I'm Lorna Mercer."

She wasn't tall, but she looked it. Slim and full-curved in all the proper places, she had long, blonde hair, full lips in a classic face, and wore a tight mini-sheath that displayed two of the best legs Shayne had ever seen. Her pale blue eyes were disturbed now, and she had been crying. But she did not look like a woman who cried much, and Shayne thought that behind her present trouble there was a sharp gleam in the eyes.

"Sit down, Miss Mercer," Shayne said. "Tell me why you think Chief Painter is wrong."

Lorna Mercer sat down. You could tell a lot about a person, especially a woman, by the way she sat. Lorna Mercer was a cool, experienced, uninhibited woman by the easy, casual way she sat, crossed her legs, aware of how good they were but not especially concerned about what men thought.

"Did I say I thought he was wrong?" she said.

"You wouldn't be here if you

didn't think whatever happened wasn't suicide or an accident," Shayne said calmly. "Who's dead?"

"A man. A friend of mine. George Winters."

"When?"

"Last night, about midnight."

"How?"

"Out a window of his apartment. Suicide or accident, the police say."

"And you say?"

"I say he was helped out that window," Lorna Mercer said harshly, her voice cracking. "George knew his own apartment. He wasn't going to fall from any window, no matter how drunk. There wasn't any note, and I know George wasn't the man to kill himself."

"How well did you know him to know that?"

"Well enough," Lorna Mercer said. "George was a high-liver, a swinger, a sport. So am I. We made nice music all ways and for over a year. We're not the marrying type, not while we're young, or we'd have gotten married. Close enough?"

"I don't know," Shayne said. "People can be pretty deep, pretty hidden."

"Not George. An open book, Shayne," Lorna Mercer said grimly. "A man on the make for the big buck, the big chance, and as little sweat as possible. Two of a kind, George and me. What makes men knock themselves off would have made George run. He was an optimist, Shayne. There was always a new town, a new game, a new coun-

try if pressure got heavy. No, George was a keep-moving-while-you-were-alive man. Death was something you run from, not jump to."

Shayne sighed. "You're giving me your opinion, your judgment, not facts. Peter Painter's not exactly a sweet guy, but he's a good cop. What facts do you have?"

"Everything except a picture of who pushed him," she said. "We had plans, big plans. We were going to Vegas in two days. He had a roll and a big feeling. We'd been living it up good the last two months, George'd made some fine contacts and was running in a lucky streak. No, he didn't kill himself."

"There's still an accident. Did he drink?"

"Sure, a lot and all the time. He could walk a high wire drunk as a fish."

"I get the idea George was a gambler?"

"You get the right idea. Not a pro. Just for fun—and fun was all he lived for."

"What was he a professional at?"

"Well, you might say he sold stocks," Lorna Mercer said. "At least, he worked for a broker on straight commission. Mostly he worked on charm. He worked on deals for big men who liked him. You understand?"

Shayne nodded sourly. "You mean he was a leech who hung around men with plenty of money. He lived on scraps, deals, thrown to him."

"And lived well. We both did. Only—"

"Only?" Shayne said, alert.

She frowned. "He was maybe nervous the last few days. Like he had a deal too big for him. That happened before. George wasn't as big as he thought he was, but—"

The hard woman rubbed at her pale eyes, pushed back the tears. "Damn it, I loved him, even if he wasn't as tough as he wanted to be. Okay, he was a fake in a lot of ways, but not with me. No, never with me."

She looked straight at Shayne. "We were two of a kind, and we levelled. He didn't kill himself, Shayne."

"You don't know why he was nervous, though?"

"No, I don't. But, like I said, he was afraid of death, and that's why I'm sure someone got him. If he was nervous he was scared, and if he was scared it was of someone. That someone got him."

"No ideas?"

"None, except he was pretty close to Hamish Coors."

"The gambler?"

"That's him."

"Coors doesn't kill people."

"Hamish has friends who do," Lorna Mercer said.

Shayne nodded for a time, thinking. He liked this woman. But he did more than that—he trusted her judgment. She wasn't a woman who had fantasies. At least, it was worth a look to see what Peter Painter did have.

"Okay, Miss Mercer. I'll see what I can find. Give my secretary your retainer, and leave your address. If you know it, also leave George Winters' address."

"Number 42 Jacinto Street, Miami Beach. Apartment 5-A."

Shayne watched her go. It was a pretty sight. She walked like a woman who knew all male eyes were on her, and knew they had to like what they saw.

III

MIKE SHAYNE parked a half a block away from 42 Jacinto Street where he could see the building. He lighted a cigarette, and sat thinking.

A police car sat near the building. On the sidewalk there was a small roped-off area to show where George Winters had died. A broken front window on the fifth floor showed where Winters had begun his end.

A broken window.

Suicides usually don't break windows; they open them.

Shayne smoked in the sunny morning, and considered the window far up on the sheer face of the building. There were no balconies. Peter Painter knew as well as Shayne that men don't usually jump from closed windows, so the Chief of Detectives must know more than Shayne did.

His gray eyes gave him part of a possible answer. The windows in the front of the building were unusually large, too large vertically as



well as wide. Shayne guessed that they were picture windows that came down almost to the floor, which meant that they were sealed windows. Built-in air-conditioners in the front wall added further proof. The windows were sealed, so if a man decided in some moment of insanity to jump, he couldn't open the window.

Would he run through it? Maybe not. But he might break it first in that desolation of despair that all suicides must have.

Shayne finished his cigarette and got out. He strolled to the building. There was no doorman or lobby desk, and the elevator was self-service. Shayne rode up to the fifth floor. It wasn't the top. In the corridor he checked the fire stairs. The doors were unlocked, an easy entry. At 5-A he rang the bell.

There was no answer, and no police seal on the door. Painter had it booked as a suicide, so why seal the scene? Shayne tried the door. It was locked. He looked around in the sunny corridor. No one was in

sight. He used his ring of special keys. The fifth key opened the door of 5-A.

A swinger, George Winters, that was what Lorna Mercer had said. The apartment Shayne faced shouted the same thing—a swinger. It was rich, gaudy, loud and built for a free-wheeling bachelor who spent more time with females than males. The colors were purple and gold and red and psychedelic, like the decoration of an Assyrian King with a marijuana high.

Couches were there—soft and deep, with muted lights. The lights were out now in the sunny morning, but Shayne had no doubts about them being muted. In the glare of daylight the whole place looked like Shayne felt on mornings with a colossal hangover. Thick, rich, too gaudy for daylight, like a stage set in an empty theater.

Shayne began his search. What he found was clothes, clothes and more clothes. Mostly male clothes, a different outfit for almost every day of the year, but enough female clothes, and not all the same size, although all of the female clothes were for lounging and bedding, not going out.

A bank book showed that while George Winters had not been rich, he hadn't been starving either. Stirring rods, coasters, matchbooks, displayed half the night spots in Miami Beach, and just about all the gambling joints. Losing track tickets filled the drawers. But most of the losing

tickets were some months old. Lorna Mercer had said that George Winters was on a lucky streak.

An address book was full of names, most of them unknown to Shayne, but a few old, familiars: Hamish Coors; Ray Incavo; Wild Bill Jensen. Shayne had a hunch that the other names were of men of no better reputation. Oddly, there were few women. Winters had not been a collector of many women, just a choice few, unless he had kept the transients in his head.

The bed—a double king size with colored sheets—had not been slept in. Shayne didn't think Peter Painter had had the bed made, so George Winters had not used his bed, one way or the other, on the night he died.

The liquor was in its cabinet, there were no glasses on tables.

The ashtrays were empty, yet there were enough of them to show that George Winters smoked.

Would a smoker, about to commit suicide, not smoke at least one last cigarette?

There was money—\$500 in bills—in a desk drawer, and three boxes of rings, cuff-links, tie clasps, all expensive, in a bureau drawer. So there had been no robbery.

The living room was as neat and untouched as a museum. No one had done much in it in the hours before George Winters had gone out the window.

Shayne looked at the broken window. As he had guessed, it was a

picture window that crossed the entire front of the living room. It had been smashed almost dead center, from the floor to ceiling. Winters hadn't even had to climb a foot to go out through it. There was no blood near the window, no blood on the glass shards, or on the jagged edges of the glass still in the frame.

No sign of any struggle in the room.

Something seemed to be missing. Shayne rubbed at his gaunt jaw. His gray eyes studied the room, especially near the window. There was something that should have been there, standing on the rug, but Shayne couldn't think what it was.

He sat down on a couch and lighted another cigarette. He let his gray eyes roam slowly over the room. Looking. Looking for anything to give him even a hint that Lorna Mercer was right, that murder had somehow been done in this room.

But there was nothing.

The redhead sighed. He felt helpless. Lorna Mercer sounded like a woman who wasn't given to fantasy or wishful thinking. A hard, practical woman who'd been around a not-so-perfect world. Yet all she had was her hunch.

Peter Painter was an experienced cop, and Painter said it was suicide or maybe accident.

It was time to find out what Painter had to go on.

Shayne stubbed out his cigarette

and left the apartment, careful that no one saw him.

IV

PETER PAINTER looked up as Mike Shayne entered, and a dark cloud seemed to pass over his small face. The dapper little Chief of Detectives had no love for Shayne. His pencil mustache literally bristled as he watched the redhead take a seat and grin at him.

"Your lucky day, Chief," Shayne said. "I'm going to help you out on a case."

"Great news. Now I don't need an enemy," Painter snarled. "What do you want, Shayne?"

"The Winters swan dive. What do you have on it?"

Painter's sour face split into a happy grin. "Winters? Say, now there's a hot case, very tough, just your meat. What are you doing now, Shayne, hustling widows for cheap money on closed cases?"

"It's closed?"

"Never opened, and you know it. Suicide, maybe an accident. Absolutely nothing else."

"Okay," Shayne nodded. "Tell me about it?"

Painter laughed. "You really want me to? I mean, maybe I better not so you can go on playing detective and collecting your fee."

"Tell me," Shayne said.

Painter leaned back, his dapper little frame neatly fitted out in a banker's blue pin stripe with

starched white shirt and very proper regimental tie.

"Okay. Here it is. Winters was alone all day. That was unusual in the first place. He visited his brother and his wife, and that's unusual. The brother, Paul, says George was 'odd', very strange for him. Like George had something on his mind, was in a fog. Hear that?"

"I hear it," Shayne said. "Go on."

Painter grinned. "George ate alone at a regular hang-out, got drunk by himself, talked about 'insurance' to the barkeep. That bartender says Winters was brooding. Get that word? Brooding? Then George headed for Hamish Coors' casino joint and played some high stakes. He lost, but didn't seem to care. Hear that, too? He didn't seem to care.

"So, he quit gambling early for him, still alone, and got tanked in Coors's bar. He staggered out about eleven, still real early for him; and drove off. A neighbor in the apartment below saw him drive up about eleven-thirty. He weaved his way inside. That's the last he was seen until about twenty minutes later he went out the window.

"His car's still parked where it was. No one else was seen anywhere. The elevator was at his floor when we found him, and we talked to every tenant in the building, and they hadn't used the elevator after eleven-thirty, so it looks like he took it up and there it sat until we arrived."

Painter stopped, still grinning, out of breath from his recital. Shayne let the silence hang for a minute. He was digesting it all. It wasn't quite the way Lorna Mercer had painted Winters for him, yet she had said he was nervous about something. Someone could have been waiting for him.

"The place has fire stairs, doors open," Shayne said.

"Sure," Painter said, "and birds have wings. No, Shayne, we've combed the area and the building for anyone who might have seen anything. No go. We've quizzed the neighbors—and they were all at home—but no one heard a sound except the window smashing, then a few moments later his scream as he went down. They saw him, and one neighbor called us. No one came out of the building that anyone saw."

Shayne cocked an eyebrow. "The window smashing, and then the scream some moments later?"

"That's right, and that's the clincher. Did you happen to notice anything missing in the apartment?"

"What makes you think I looked?"

"I know you. Rules don't matter to Mike Shayne. My men reported a man going inside the building. I knew it was you, and you busted into that apartment. I won't worry about that now, as long as I see you slink out of here with your nose quiet and your tail down."

"I noticed something missing in the apartment," Shayne said, "what was it, and what does it add to?"

"It adds to suicide," Painter said. "You see, it was a standing ashtray; the heavy kind with a heavy, weighted base to keep it upright even when you tilt it. We found it down on the street with Winters. No marks on the body to indicate he'd been hit. So—"

"The ashtray was used to break the window first so he could jump," Shayne said wearily, nodding. "A sudden fit of despair, he breaks the window by throwing the ashtray through it, then looks out a moment, and jumps. Maybe he waited until he saw the ashtray hit, the way he would hit."

Painter nodded slowly, still half-grinning at Shayne, but half-serious now, too. "That's what I figure. The kind of irrational thing a drunken suicide would do. No marks on him, Shayne. No sign of struggle. That window had to be broken first to jump. If someone had pushed him, why break the window first?"

"No," Painter went on, "if someone had pushed him, it would have been through that window, and then there would have been cuts on him, torn clothes, and blood on the glass. He jumped, that's all. Who's your client? The Mercer woman?"

Shayne nodded. "Yes."

"A nice woman, and tough, but she liked the guy too much to see it straight."

"I guess so," Shayne said. "Winters was a smoker, right? There were no butts or ashes in the ashtrays. He was in that apartment

twenty minutes, sweating, thinking of suicide. He was drunk, nervous, despondent. He'd have smoked, Painter. Maybe four or five cigarettes in his condition. At least one, a last one."

"Maybe, and maybe not," Painter said. "Maybe he was in such a state he couldn't smoke. Too tense, too low. Or maybe he did smoke, and the butts were in the ashtray that went out the window!"

Painter said that with a gleam of triumph in his eyes. He watched Shayne like a cat watching a mouse he's just trapped in a blind corner.

The redhead nodded slowly. "Okay, it's possible. Can I take a look at the body?"

"Yes, sure," Painter said grandly, the winner.

As they walked along the corridors to the morgue, Shayne asked: "Who identified the body?"

"The brother and his wife, Paul Winters."

"Did they say anything?"

"She cried some."

"I mean anything they saw that was unusual?"

"No, nothing. Except that George was wearing his most conservative suit. They thought that proved how despondent he felt."

In the cool interior of the morgue the gum-chewing attendant checked his list of the dead as if he were checking an inventory of spare parts. His finger tapped a number, and he got up and led the way down the row of crypt drawers all shut and

looking like a giant filing cabinet. He pulled one drawer open without a word, and stepped back in silence to watch.

Shayne looked. It wasn't pretty. A five-story fall breaks a lot of bones, leaves a lot of blood and bruises. The face was all but obliterated by the impact, but the neat, pale hands were untouched. Smooth hands without decoration. The legs smooth and pale. Shayne looked away.

"Nothing except from the fall?"

"That's what the Doc says," Painter said.

"What did he have on him?"

"Take a look," Painter said.

The attendant swung away from the wall, closed the crypt, and led them back to a large metal cabinet. He checked another list and opened a small drawer. George Winter's effects were few: ten dollars in cash; a ring of keys; a handkerchief; a broken wristwatch stopped at exactly eight minutes to twelve.

"That's all? No wallet? No rings or cuff links?"

"Button shirt. His brother says he never carried a wallet. It bulged his clothes, and he preferred cash in his pocket."

"He didn't have much."

"Hamish Coors says he lost about two hundred, and liked to sign markers anyway. His markers were good up to a thousand. At least in Coors's joint."

"That's a high limit for a small-

timer. Did he have a limit at Incavo's?"

"Yeah, five hundred. Hamish knew him better."

Shayne nodded. Painter nodded to the bored attendant, who put George Winter's effects back in their drawer.

Painter walked with Shayne as far as the outer door, and grinned as the redhead left without another word. Painter enjoyed winning—especially over Shayne.

V

MIKE SHAYNE tried to call Lorna Mercer but got no answer. He went to lunch.

Over his manicotti he thought about George Winters. He thought about how Painter described the dead man's last day, and about how Lorna Mercer described the man. Could the two pictures be made to fit one man?

Maybe, if something very big, perhaps very damned dangerous, had been worrying George Winters. Something so big it changed an airy swinger into a brooding wreck. A swinger who hung around with pretty touchy company—Hamish Coors, Wild Bill, Incavo. A scared man might act the same way Winters had acted the day he died, but so would a despondent man.

Shayne finished his lunch with a stiff double cognac, savoring the fine brandy. Then he went out to his car, deciding to have another

look at the dead man's apartment.

The police car was gone, the portion of roped sidewalk clear now. Above, a man was working on the broken window. The man had just about finished the job of repair. Once that was done, the owner would ask George Winters's relatives to clear out his things, and then the apartment would be ready for the next tenant.

George Winters would be gone for good, only a file in the office of the Miami Beach police, and a memory in the minds of his brother and Miss Lorna Mercer.

Shayne sat in his car watching the building until he saw the workman finish the window and vanish inside. He waited a few more minutes. The workman did not come out. Shayne rubbed his ear. He waited ten more minutes. The workman did not appear.

Shayne got out of his car and entered the building. He looked around the lobby. The only other door was the fire door. He opened it and found the stairs went only up, and no other door. Puzzled, he went back to the lobby. There was no way out except the lobby.

The building had a basement, but it was entered from the outside only in front.

Shayne climbed the fire stairs. Where had the workman gone? He found his answer on the third floor. The fire-stairs window opened onto a set-back projection that roofed the rear of the second floor of the



building. There were more rooms on the second floor than on the higher floors.

And the workman had a scaffold on the side of the extra roof making some repairs. The man was out there now, and the scaffold had a ladder that went down into a back alley. Anyone could get out of the building that way.

Shayne climbed on up to the fifth floor. The door to 5-A was locked again. This time he knew which key to use, and slipped inside quickly.

Nothing had changed, except now the afternoon sun slanted in at a softer angle, making the garish place less grotesque. At night, with darkness outside and soft light inside it would even be a pleasant-looking room despite its wild colors.

Shayne stood just inside the door, studying the repaired picture window. At night, if the room were dark, the bright glow of the Miami Beach night sky would light up the area around the picture window, and nowhere else. The room would be dark, and a prowler standing back in the room would have been almost invisible.

If George Winters had come in, worried, and gone to stand at the window, he could have been pushed out by a hidden attacker before he knew what hit him. Except for the ashtray.

All right. First the ashtray, then the heave-ho. But that would mean two attackers, or some other way of immobilizing Winters before tossing him down. Still, it could have been done.

There wasn't a shred of evidence that it had been done. Just the hunch of a woman Shayne wanted to believe. Why did he want to believe it? Just to show up Peter Painter? That was more than possible. Was his judgment being clouded by his eagerness to battle Painter? Maybe he—

The sound that stopped his train of thought was the elevator coming up and stopping at the fifth floor. He heard the door sigh open. His sixth sense told him to move. The footsteps out in the hall were soft, light. Not the step of policemen.

He glided into a space behind thick drapes that covered the side windows.

The footsteps stopped outside the door of 5-A. There was a silence. Then a scraping at the lock—but not an exploratory scraping. The person outside had a key!

The door swung open and closed quickly, and Shayne became aware of a man inside the apartment. A man who stood absolutely still for a long minute.

Shayne couldn't see the man through the narrow opening in the drapes, but he knew exactly what the man was doing—standing there at the door slowly and carefully studying the room for any sign of danger.

The intruder, whoever he was, wanted to be alone.

The man moved at last.

Shayne saw him through the narrow opening in the curtains. A short, heavy-set man with something in his hand. Something that was a gun.

Above the gun was a dapper, expensive suit, and a hard face that showed no expression at all. A frozen mask of a face, heavy and cruel, like the face of a deadly animal that kills and maims without thought or memory of its actions ten seconds afterwards.

Then, as Shayne watched, the man holstered his pistol with one quick, smooth motion into a shoulder holster and walked swiftly into the next room. There was the sound of drawers being opened.

Shayne drew his own automatic, slipped out of his hiding place, and stepped with the soft tread of a big

cat to the door into the next room. The man didn't hear him or look up at all.

The man was far too intent on his work. He was carefully, expertly, searching the bedroom of the apartment inch by inch. Shayne watched him for a full five minutes, only his left eye around the corner of the door. The precaution was unnecessary—the man was the nerveless type, and once he had decided the apartment was empty, he concentrated fully on his work.

As Shayne watched he slowly came to an odd conclusion. The man wasn't searching for anything special, he was searching to be sure that something wasn't there. The man was making a check to be sure the apartment was clean, which meant that the living room would probably get the same treatment.

The instant Shayne saw that the intruder had almost finished with the bedroom, he slipped back to the shelter of his curtains. Not twenty seconds later the man came out into the living room, alert again, listening to the sounds outside in the building, surveying the living room.

Satisfied again, the expressionless man began his methodical work once more. There were fewer places to search in the living room, and some ten minutes later, the man sat down, lit a thin black cigar, and let his hooded eyes go blank while he still stared around the silent room.

The deadly eyes seemed to rest for one long instant on the curtains

where Shayne hid, but then moved on.

A cool, careful customer, the hard-looking man, who was sitting relaxed making absolutely sure he had missed nothing. He sat until his black stogie was all smoked, calm and deliberate, and then stubbed out the cigar in an ashtray and stood up.

The instant the door closed behind the man, Shayne hurried to the door to listen. He heard the elevator come up, the doors sigh open and closed. Shayne opened the door a hair and peered out. The man was gone. It was no trick.

Shayne ran out and down the fire stairs as fast as he could move. When the slow elevator reached the lobby, Shayne was already seated there, looking innocent. The heavy-faced searcher passed him with one quick glance and walked on out.

Shayne went behind the man.

In the street the man climbed into a car and started the motor. Then the man slowly lit another of his black cigars. It was all the time Shayne needed to reach his car and be waiting when the man drove past.

Shayne took up a careful, cautious tail. He had a hunch that this man had been tailed many times, and would be automatically alert.

VI

IT WAS HARD careful work. Three times Mike Shayne used turn-offs he knew would bring him back on the tail of his quarry without any

possibility of the quarry escaping.

The hard man seemed to drive straight on without spotting Shayne behind him. There were no signs of alarm in the car ahead, and at last the redhead found himself in a warehouse section of Miami near the bay. The heavy man stopped in the shadow of a warehouse and went inside.

Shayne drove on past out of sight, U-turned, and drove slowly back as close as he could while staying out of view from the warehouse. He got out and approached the warehouse on foot. There was cover up to a wooden fence that surrounded the warehouse.

Shayne slipped along the fence until he reached the building itself. On the other side of the fence there was a fire escape of the warehouse where his quarry had vanished. Shayne swarmed up the fence to the fire escape and peered in at a window that was open.

He saw nothing inside but the shadowy interior of a walkway. He climbed in and peered down at the warehouse floor. It was piled high with crates in the dim interior light. Trucks stood in an open space near the double exit doors.

No one was in sight.

Then Shayne heard voices.

They came from a glassed-in office on the far side of the walkway at the top of a flight of stairs up from the warehouse floor. Shayne could see shadows moving inside the office.

He began to work his way silently along the high walkway in the shadows until he reached the glassed-in office. There he lay prone on the walkway under the windows and listened to the voices. They were low, but clear.

"Okay," a deep voice said. "You found nothing. You're sure of that, Mingo?"

"I said I was, boss," a rasping voice said. It was the kind of voice fighters get from being hit too often in the throat. Shayne had a good hunch it was the voice of the apartment-searcher—Mingo.

A light, thin voice said, "Mingo knows his job, Mr. Jones'll be satisfied."

"To hell with your Mr. Jones," the deep voice said—The Boss. "I got to know we're not tied to him, no way. That clear?"

"That's clear," the thin voice said. "I'd say we had no more problem in the matter."

"What about the woman?" the Boss said.

"She's okay," the thin voice said. "Relax. It's all smooth now."

"I didn't get where I am by relaxing, Farley. You run your business and let me run mine. I spent too much time building up my operation to let some punks wreck it."

Mingo's rasping voice said, "I'll keep my eyes open, Boss."

"You do that, and—"

Shayne heard no more of whatever the Boss said. Where he lay on the walkway he heard heavy foot-

steps coming up the stairs from the warehouse floor below. Shayne couldn't be missed where he lay. But if he moved he'd be spotted, too. He had no choice.

When the footfalls were half way up, Shayne jumped up and began to trot back along the walkway.

"Hey! You there!"

Shayne didn't look around. He kept running along the walkway.

"Stop! You!"

Voices rose in a hubub behind him. He heard the office door slam open and many feet beginning to run after him.

"Cut him off!" The Boss's voice cried.

"Shoot to kill," came Mingo's rasping croak.

Down on the warehouse floor men appeared from nowhere, pounding along under the walkway to reach a flight of stairs that would cut Shayne off.

"No!" the thin-voiced man. "Take him alive!"

Shayne reached the top of the stairs that would cut him off from his escape.

A shadowed figure appeared at the top of the stairs.

The figure swung at him.

Shayne ducked the punch, stepped in and chopped a short left and right to the man's belly. The man doubled over with a cry of pain.

Two more men were scrambling frantically up the iron stairs at him.

Shayne hit the doubled-over man with a short, murderous left hook.



The man grunted and hurled backwards down the stairs into the two coming up. All three men lost their hold and fell bouncing down the iron stairs in a wild heap at the bottom.

Shayne had no time to celebrate.

The others were coming up behind him on the walkway.

He ran on, reached the window.

"Get him, damn it!" The Boss cried.

Shayne dropped on one knee, aimed his automatic, fired.

There was a scream as one man went down, hit in the leg. The others flattened like quail taking cover. The Boss raged somewhere back out of sight. Shayne was out the window and going down the fire escape. He went over the fence, and ran along it toward the street.

Two men appeared to block his way.

Shayne never slackened stride.

He went into the two men like a fullback into a goal-line stand.

He was lucky. He hit the first of the men square in the chest with his shoulder. At full speed, he knocked the man ten feet back and flat on the ground screaming with the pain of broken ribs.

The second man swung a metal bar. It caught Shayne on the shoulder and his left arm went dead—numbed by the blow.

Before the man could recover with the heavy bar, Shayne brought a right cross from his toes and hit the man flush on the nose. Blood geysered into the sun and the man went down as if hit by a truck.

Two shots exploded the hot air, and bullets slammed with soft thuds into the wood of the fence.

Shayne didn't stop to see who was shooting or from where. He ran on along the street until he reached his car. He tumbled behind the wheel, thanked all the stars he could think of that his old bus started the first time, burned rubber in a wild U-turn, climbed the sidewalk, and was going away before his remaining pursuers were within twenty yards.

He drove without bothering to look back for six blocks. Then, sure he wasn't being chased any longer, he doubled around and drove grimly back to the warehouse from the opposite direction.

He drove slowly, cautiously, but before he had come within two blocks of the warehouse again he saw two cars and a truck drive out

fast and race off away from him.

Swearing under his breath, the redhead chased. This time his luck ran out. He lost the cars and the truck in heavy traffic, and gave up the chase.

He had not had time to see the faces of any of them, and now he had lost them. All he knew was one title, The Boss, and one name, Mingo. But he now had one strong idea—something was wrong in the death of George Winters.

Something that worried The Boss, and worried even more a man named Mr. Jones.

It was beginning to look like there was more to Lorna Mercer's hunch than pipe-dreams. It was time to find out more about the late George Winters.

VII

MIKE SHAYNE found the modest house of Paul Winters in a middle-class tract cul-de-sac in a quiet residential section of Miami itself. Even from the outside the neat little house almost screamed that George and Paul Winters had been very different men. The flower gardens of Paul Winters showed a quiet man who devoted a lot of time to pleasures a lot simpler than the pleasures that turned on George.

For some minutes there was no answer to Shayne's ringing. Then he heard movement inside the house, and the door opened.

Shayne blinked and his mouth

dropped open. A ghost stood in front of him.

"What do you want?" the ghost said.

Alive, with anger in his eyes and something else, the man who stood in the open doorway was the same man Shayne had last seen dead on a morgue slab.

"Well?" the ghost said. "Who the hell are you? What are you—Christ, I get it—you think I'm George! Who are you?"

Shayne blinked and came back to reality. "Paul Winters?"

"Who the hell did you expect here? Now who are you?"

"The name's Mike Shayne. I'm a private detective."

"Private? Do we have to have privates now? The real police weren't bad enough? Can't you people leave us alone? George is dead. Let us have some peace, damn you!"

The man, Paul Winters, started to close the door. Shayne slipped a big foot out. "Don't you want to know who killed your brother, Paul?"

Paul Winters stopped with the door half closed. He just stood there looking at Shayne.

"Killed?" Paul said.

"That's what I said," Shayne said.

"But—" Paul Winters began, and then Shayne saw the twin-brother's eyes suddenly look over Shayne's shoulder, look all around.

Paul Winters said, "The police were sure—" The brother stopped, blinked. "Come in, Mr. Shayne."

Shayne stepped inside the neat little house. Inside it was just the same as outside—neat, clean, well-cared-for. The house of quiet people who liked the life they were living. A long, long way from the gaudy apartment of George Winters, a man who wasn't quiet, and maybe hadn't liked the life he was living so much after all.

"In here," Paul Winters said.

The brother led Shayne into a small study-TV room, and nodded for Shayne to sit down. Shayne sat. Paul Winters remained standing. The brother paced the room. Shayne waited.

Paul said, "You didn't know George and I were twins?"

"No. You weren't twins except in looks."

Paul nodded. "How true that is. How damned true! The poor, stupid slob with his big ways. Look what it got him. Killed, you say? But the police seemed so sure it was suicide."

"The police can be wrong."

Paul stopped pacing. "You can prove they're wrong?"

"No, not yet, but I've got a pretty good hunch they're wrong."

Paul watched the redhead "Hunch? No proof yet? But you're working on it?"

"I'm working on it, and I don't think George killed himself. I want some help to prove it."

"Of course. Whatever I can—" Paul said. "Who are you working for? I mean, you don't work for

nothing. George wasn't that important."

"My client is my business," Shayne said. "Let's just say that someone besides you wants to know what happened to George and why."

Paul Winters sighed. "A woman, I suppose."

Shayne didn't hear a sound behind him until the woman spoke. Her voice was suddenly in the room. A light yet somehow harsh voice.

"It was always a woman with George, wasn't it?" her voice said. "George has a way with women. George can get a woman to do anything for him."

Paul said, "He could, Agnes. George isn't getting help from anyone now."

The woman nodded slowly, walked into the room without even looking at Shayne, and sat down with her arms around her body as if she were cold.

"My wife, Mr. Shayne," Paul Winters said, and went to stand with his hand on the woman's shoulder.

Shayne nodded. "Mrs. Winters."

She didn't respond, Agnes Winters. She just sat, and then she began to talk. "He was a wild man, George was. Always in trouble, always asking Paul to help, always hurting those who helped him. But they went on helping him. They always helped him."

"Easy, Agnes," Paul said, lightly stroking her shoulder. "He's dead. We can't help him now."

"You can help me find his killer," Shayne said.

Agnes Winters looked at Shayne now. "Can we? How can we help? I want to find who killed him."

Shayne eyed her, his gray eyes points of steel. "You're not surprised that he might have been killed?"

"I'm not surprised," Agnes Winters said.

"Can you tell me something?"

Agnes was silent for a time. Paul Winters still stroked her shoulder.

"We were very close, the three of us," Paul said. "Agnes is taking it hard, poor girl."

Agnes nodded. "Yes, hard," she said, and then. "He was worried. Very worried. For his life. He knew something. He knew something very dangerous to know, and he was afraid that what he knew would get him killed."

"He told you that?"

"He told me," Agnes said.

Paul Winters said, "He didn't tell us in so many words, Mr. Shayne. We don't really know anything. But he was scared, yes. That's why I was so sure when the police said he had killed himself. He had a lot on his mind."

"You think he killed himself?" Shayne asked.

"Yes, I do. Agnes is distraught. There really wasn't anything at all we could tell you except that he was nervous, uneasy, worried. We don't really know anything. I think George killed himself, and we've been hurt

bad enough. We don't need an investigation."

Agnes looked at Paul. "Don't we Paul?"

"No. You've suffered much too much. George killed himself. That's the end of it."

"No," Agnes said. "Ask that woman, Mr. Shayne. Lorna Mercer. Ask her, she was George's woman. She knows what was on his mind. Find out who killed him, Mr. Shayne. I want to know. I don't care if we're hurt a little. I want to know!"

"The police can handle it, Agnes," Paul Winters said. "We don't need a private detective involved."

The woman said nothing. She just sat there and stared up at her husband. Shayne left.

VIII

LORNA MERCER'S apartment was in Miami Beach only a half a mile from where George Winters had died. Mike Shayne had tried to call after leaving the Winters, but there was still no answer. The day was running down fast, and all Shayne had so far were questions without answers.

He left his car in the parking lot of the apartment building and rode up to the third floor. There was no answer to his ring at Lorna Mercer's door. The redhead reached for his ring of keys—and stopped. His gray eyes narrowed.

The door was open, unlocked.

Shayne drew his automatic, and pushed the door open fast, looking behind it through the space between door and jamb. No one was behind the door. Shayne stepped inside carefully, and closed the door.

The apartment was smaller than George Winters's apartment, and not a tenth as gaudy. There was even a certain Spartan air to the place. As if there was more of the man in Lorna Mercer than there had been in George Winters.

But there was little of Lorna Mercer herself in the apartment now. The place was empty. It was neat, clean, with no sign of struggle or hasty departure. There were no glasses to indicate visitors, no remains of meals, no sign of packing—the place was just empty.

Shayne looked around with a frown on his rugged face. There was something odd about it all. The apartment was almost too neat. He went into the kitchen. Nothing was left out. As if no one had lived in the kitchen for months, yet he had seen Lorna Mercer only this morning.

Shayne opened the cabinets and checked. There was adequate food, exactly what he would have expected to find in the apartment of a woman who lived in it day-to-day. Yet, somehow, the kitchen was too clean—nothing left out to be washed when Lorna returned.

It was in the glassware cabinet that he saw the first clue to what could be wrong. Two glasses were

out of place. Not something obvious at first glance, but after a moment of looking it was clear that Lorna Mercer kept her glasses in a certain pattern in the cabinet, and two glasses were not placed in that pattern.

Someone else had cleaned up the kitchen. Someone who had done too good a job. A man, probably. A man who wanted no trace of anyone having been in the apartment, but who had gone too far and erased the traces of everyone, even of Lorna Mercer herself, and the daily debris that must accumulate in any apartment lived in by a working girl.

The redhead now began to search in earnest. Lorna Mercer's two rooms were not hard to search. He found nothing. Nothing that even hinted toward George Winters.

Shayne sat down in the living room, lit a cigarette, and stared around while he thought. Someone had cleaned up the apartment. The door had been open. In the warehouse they had talked about a woman—men who weren't exactly pillars of society. Men with guns and something to hide, and with some problem they thought was settled with the death of George Winters.

Men who had been looking to be sure George Winters had left no clues to his problems behind him.

Had they come here, then? The same men? Mingo? The Boss? The Mr. Jones they had mentioned?

Shayne's gray eyes slowly stopped in their observation of the room. He was looking at the book case. It was a built-in bookcase with well-read recent novels and a number of sets in rich leather bindings. They looked like books from the past, some memory of Lorna Mercer's younger days with a family, a father who read.

But it wasn't the old days Shayne was thinking about when he stared at the books. It was that in a leather-bound set of the works of Joseph Conrad, it was strange to see an almost identical leather-bound volume of one book by Dickens—*Great Expectations*.

The set of Dickens was on the next shelf, minus the one volume.

The redhead smoked and looked at the row of Conrad books for some time. Had the mistake been made by the man who had cleaned the place? Maybe, but while a careful man might not notice a pattern of glasses in a cabinet, he could read and would have known that Dickens belonged with Dickens, not with Conrad.

And the volumes were *almost* identical. It would take a very watchful, *searching* eye to spot the anomaly.

Shayne got up and walked to the bookcase. He took down the heavy leather-bound volume of *Great Expectations*. Was there some hint in that title itself?

He opened the book. Or it fell open of its own accord. It fell open



the back was a simple notation of time and place: *Thurs., Jan. 10, 9:00 a.m., Woodson Bldg.* An appointment notation, which was just about what Shayne might have expected to find on an insurance agent's card.

Frowning, Shayne slipped the card into his pocket and went to find the telephone book. The insurance company was duly listed, with its branch office in Miami Beach, and a listing of its agents. J. Dudley Burns was one of the Miami Beach agents.

Still, why would Lorna Mercer have hidden the card, and then in a book enough out of place in the set of Conrad to attract his eye? Something that might have caught the eye of anyone looking hard enough.

Or had Lorna hidden it in that way so that she would know where it was, while most other people would miss it?

Or had she hidden it at all? Had she just used it as a bookmark, and replaced the volume on the wrong shelf in some kind of hurry?

Or had someone else hidden it?

He picked up the telephone, dialed Peter Painter. The dapper Chief wasn't in the office.

"Tell him Mike Shayne called. I want him to do me a favor," Shayne said to Painter's assistant. "See if he can find any reason to be interested in the Woodson Building in Miami at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 10th."

because something was between two of the pages.

Shayne held a small business card in his hands.

A business card like any other. The card of an insurance agent named J. Dudley Burns who worked for a Miami company with a branch office in Miami Beach. J. Dudley Burns worked out of the Miami Beach branch.

Shayne looked at it. There was nothing to indicate it was anything but what it looked like. Shayne tugged slowly on his left earlobe. Was it some kind of front?

He turned the card over, and on

"I'll ask him, Shayne, only you know the Chief."

"You mean you know me and the Chief," Shayne said. "Tell him anyway. It might be interesting, and he's a good cop in spite of himself."

"I'll tell him," the assistant said coldly.

Shayne hung up and considered the card again. He looked at his watch. There was still time to talk to J. Dudley Burns before the office closed.

IX

THE INSURANCE office was a reserved affair on the third floor of a shiny office building in the heart of Miami Beach. It was all dark wood and wall to wall carpet to impress the clients with its solidity and endurance.

The blond receptionist was expensive front. If the company was any kind of fake, it was a hell of a good fake. The receptionist looked Mike Shayne up and down with a fixed smile.

"Yes, sir? Can I be of service?"

"I'll bet you could," Shayne said. "But I'm looking for J. Dudley Burns."

The blonde never batted a hair. "Mr. Burns. I see. Do you have an appointment?"

"No."

"Then I'm afraid—"

"I'm the police, sister," Shayne said in his best menacing manner.

"Really?" the blonde said, about

as terrified as a rhinoceros. "May I see your badge and credentials?"

"I'm a private cop, a detective," Shayne said. His face was a faint pink, like a small boy caught saying he was Superman.

If he had expected the receptionist to laugh, he got a shock. She didn't laugh. She had been sneering when he said he was a real cop. When he said he was a private she didn't laugh—she went dead white.

Shayne stared at her, puzzled.

"A private detective?" she managed to get out. "Just a moment, please. Sit down. I—Mr. Burns is out of the office, but you can talk to our branch manager, Mr. DeSalle."

Shayne opened his mouth to say that he didn't really want to talk to Mr. DeSalle, but it was too late before he could make a sound. The blond moved with the speed of light to buzz Mr. DeSalle. Shayne decided that maybe it would be a good idea to talk to the manager after all.

"Mr. DeSalle will see you at once," the blonde said. "Room 210, straight along the hall to the left, second door on the right."

Shayne went along the elegant corridor, sinking into the deep carpet, feeling like a pioneer in a dangerous swamp. The world of elegant selling was one he had never liked much—everything smooth, shiny, geared to sell nervous men services and products they really didn't need.

When he opened the door to room 210, a short, heavy, tanned man in a gray palm beach suit jumped up like a puppet on a string. The man's face was all careful smiles and soothing manner, but there was uneasiness in his eyes. Was this whole big insurance branch a front, a fake?

"Mr. Shayne? Do sit down, please."

Shayne sat down. Mr. DeSalle dragged out a handkerchief and mopped at his face, even though the office was air-conditioned to a temperature just over the South Pole.

"You're wondering what all this fuss is about?" DeSalle said.

"I'm wondering," Shayne said. "All I wanted to do was talk to J. Dudley Burns. I'm not a real cop."

"Yes," De Salle said, "that's the point. The real police are no problem. It's when you said you were private. You understand that an insurance company must be above reproach, especially here in Miami Beach, where there are so many fly-by-night operations and shyster tricksters."

Shayne understood. "And a private eye is usually on the tail of some hanky-panky."

"Yes, just so," DeSalle said. "I do hope our Dudley hasn't been behaving indiscreetly in any way? What are you here for?"

"As far as I know he's done nothing. I'm investigating a death,

and his name came up. Just his name, maybe just selling insurance. Frankly, I'm running down all leads."

"A death? Something irregular? Was the decedent insured by us?"

"I don't know about him being insured, and his death is maybe irregular, like a suicide."

DeSalle mopped at his face again, even in the frigid cool of his office. "Suicide? What was the name?"

"George Winters."

DeSalle buzzed his intercom furiously. When a crisp female voice answered, the manager snapped out orders to check all claims for the name George Winters, and if that proved negative, check all policies. DeSalle sat back.

"Suicide is most sticky for us. You understand?"

"Especially when it could have been an accident."

DeSalle nodded. "Yes, a lot of double indemnity on that. Frankly, I'd rather pay than fight, but our head office is stingy. How did you find Dudley involved in this?"

"I didn't say he was. I just found his name and your company as I was going along. I came to see if he had anything he could tell me."

"I see. Well—"

The intercom buzzed. Shayne realized that the company must be computerized to get answers so fast. More and more the redhead was becoming certain that the company

was a legitimate insurance outfit and nothing more.

DeSalle listened to the report of his secretary. The heavy-set manager nodded and made notes and finally flipped off his switch.

"Here it is: no claims for a George Winters, and no listed policy. So—"

The intercom buzzed again. DeSalle flipped it, "Yes, Marion?"

"Mr. Burns is back," the female voice said.

"Good," DeSalle said. "Send him in here at once."

DeSalle sat back. "It'll take a few minutes, if I know Dudley. He's a careful, precise type. Never a wilted collar, never a suit without a perfect press, never late and never early. On the nose."

"He sounds good and dull."

"Dull as they come, and for us the best there is. With Dudley, you don't need a computer."

DeSalle seemed to have run out of conversation after that, the manager visibly more relaxed on finding that George Winters was not an insuree of his company. Shayne just sat thinking: if George Winters was not an insuree, was Lorna Mercer? If not, what had she been doing with the business card? Especially, why had it been hidden—if it had been really hidden.

The door opened. Shayne turned to see a small, slender man in a gray suit. There was something trim about the newcomer, a hint of athletic muscles under the gray suit,

like those New York stockbrokers who spend every evening playing squash at the Yale Club. The eyes behind rimless glasses were intelligent but placid, and there was more than a hint of diffidence in the way the man entered.

"You wanted me, Mr. DeSalle?"

"Sit down, Dudley. This is Mr. Shayne, a private detective."

J. Dudley Burns's quiet eyes turned to Shayne, and his bland, nondescript salesman's face showed considerable alarm. "A private detective? To do with me? I don't understand."

Shayne explained how Burns's name had come up in the course of his investigation of the death of George Winters.

Burns said, "I'm sure I know no George Winters. Why, I can't recall even making a call on such a man."

"How about Lorna Mercer?"

"Mercer? Lorna? Miss or Mrs.?"

"Miss."

Burns closed his eyes. Shayne could almost hear the wheels of his memory-bank whirring. "No, as far as I can ascertain I made no call on a Miss Lorna Mercer. Just how did my name come up?"

"I found your card in Miss Mercer's apartment."

"My card!" J. Dudley Burns cried, and smiled for the first time, "Why, Mr. Shayne, an insurance agent hands out his cards with great regularity and wide distribution. It's essential to our trade, you see? Al-

most anyone could have my card; passed on to them by someone else, don't you see?"

Shayne nodded. "I see, but there was a few special things about this card. First, it was hidden in a book."

"Hidden? In a book?" J. Dudley Burns sighed. "I'm afraid my cards end up as bookmarks more often than not. It's the fate of unsolicited business cards of all types, I fear. What was the second special thing about my card you had in mind?"

"There was a note on the back. An appointment, it looked like." Shayne recited the message he had found on the back of the card. "Mean anything to you?"

"Nothing at all," J. Dudley Burns said. "You see, the second most common use for unsolicited business cards is for jotting down notes, especially appointments. No, there's nothing very special in all that, Mr. Shayne. I'm afraid I can't help you."

"You have no way of knowing who you give a card to?"

"You mean a particular card?"

"Yes."

"Not unless I have a notation on it. Do you have the card with you?"

Shayne showed Burns the card. The agent took it and looked at both sides, then shook his head. "No. I made no marks on this card, I'm sorry. However, it is one of my newest batch of cards. Less than a year old."

"Can you give me a list of people you've called on within the year?"

"Heavens, no! I call on very many people."

"Any gamblers or gangsters?"

DeSalle exploded, "Really, Mr. Shayne! We don't—"

J. Dudley Burns held up a small, manicured hand. "Wait, now, Mr. DeSalle. Gangsters and gamblers today have a tendency to look and act like any normal businessman. I may well have called on some. In fact, I know of one gambler I did call on, and sold a policy to."

Shayne said, "Hamish Coors?"

"Yes," Burns said, surprised. "I see you're a good detective."

"Only that George Winters and Lorna Mercer both know Hamish Coors," Shayne said. "They could have gotten the card from him."

Burns seemed to think. "Yes, it's possible. I did call on him early in the year."

"Do you know any gangsters?" and Shayne described The Boss and Mingo as best he could. "That ring any bells?"

"No," Burns said, "I'm afraid not. I'm sorry. Is that all, Mr. Shayne? I do like to clean my desk before the day ends."

Shayne stood up. "I guess that's all, and thanks. If I run across any better leads, can I call you about them?"

"Certainly. At any time."

Shayne nodded to the manager. "Thanks for your time, Mr. DeSalle."

"I'm glad there isn't any trouble," DeSalle said.

Shayne left, walking along the elegant corridor with its plush carpet. It was hard to think of this insurance company involved in murder, but the redhead wasn't quite satisfied about the card.

Maybe it was a card someone just happened to have and made a note on—and maybe it wasn't. He decided it was time to have a talk with Hamish Coors.

X

HAMISH COOR'S gambling casino was in a private hotel just off the main strip of Miami Beach. It occupied two floors of the hotel that was owned by Coors himself. On the floor below the casino, Hamish Coors had his office—a real estate office for the eyes of the law.

Two slim, well-spoken men sat at desks in the outer office of the 'real estate' company. The shorter of the two stood as Shayne came in.

"Yes, sir. Can I—"

The taller man, at a rear desk, said, "Relax, Pete. That's Mike Shayne."

Shayne grinned at the taller man. "Hello, Marlo."

"Greetings, shamus. You want the boss?"

"If I can have him."

"Cool your heels a while," Marlo said.

Shayne sat. Neither of the men looked or sounded like the hoods in the warehouse. Shayne waited. It wasn't long. He'd never had any

real trouble with Hamish Coors. Few people had trouble with Coors and were around to tell about it. The gambler was a careful man in whatever business he got into.

Marlo came out of the inner office. "Go on in, shamus."

Shayne went in; Hamish Coors didn't get up. The tall, stooped gambler leaned back in his chair and eyed Shayne. Coors had always looked more like a cowboy than a hustler, and usually wore a white Stetson to make the image better.

"Problems, Shayne?" Coors said.

A silent man sat in the corner on a tilted-back chair. The guard. Shayne didn't recognize the guard, and the man just sat alert without speaking.

"I'm working on the George Winters murder," Shayne said.

"Murder?" Hamish Coors raised an eyebrow, picked at his fingernails. "I heard Winters took a swan dive on his own."

"I don't think so," Shayne said bluntly.

Coors shrugged. "Who would want to kill Winters? He wasn't a bad guy. Paid up on time, gambled square. I carried him for a thousand limit, and he was okay."

"That's a high limit, Hamish."

"He was good. Any ideas about who killed him if he didn't dive?"

"I came to ask you."

"So you asked."

"Tell me about the night Winters died."

"Painter probably already told

you," Coors said. "But, okay. He come in kind of early for him, and alone. That Lorna Mercer's usually with him, but she wasn't. He played in the high stake game like always. He lost, and didn't seem to give a damn. That wasn't like Winters. He hated to lose.

"About ten p.m. he quit. That was early, too. He got tanked up in my bar, and staggered out about eleven. That's it. He was acting kind of funny for him, sort of real nervous."

"Did he talk about insurance?"

"Insurance?"

"Yeah. I just remembered someone else said he did."

"Not around me."

"You buy insurance from a guy named J. Dudley Burns?"

"Hell, Shayne, I don't go around remembering names of guys sell me insurance. I got a lot of insurance."

"Did you see anyone that night interested in Winters?"

Hamish Coors leaned even farther back. The tall gambler looked once at his silent bodyguard, then leaned forward across his desk. "What do you do with anything I tell you?"

"Depends what it is," Shayne said. "Silence if I can."

Coors nodded. "Okay. Murph over there is my shadow, right? He watches for trouble. That night he saw what maybe was trouble. A gunsel named Mingo was in the place. Mingo works for Torre Danelli. Danelli and me we don't get along, like noways at all. Torre



tried to muscle me more'n once."

"Danelli? That's the Mafia family here, right?"

"So they tell me. Put it this way. Danelli's the Boss in about half of Florida, okay? So I take a look. It was Mingo all right, only he didn't seem to have much interest in me. He wasn't far from Winters all night, and he left right after Winters. Only Mingo knows his work, I couldn't swear he was even aware Winters was in the place."

"What was Mingo doing?"

"Drinking. Nothing special. Re-

laxed and all that. Only I never saw Mingo drink in here before."

Shayne rubbed his chin and got up. "Thanks, Hamish."

"You heard nothing from me, Shayne. Remember that."

Shayne left.

XI

IN HIS CAR Mike Shayne thought about Torre Danelli. He had little doubt that The Boss he had heard was Danelli. Only he hadn't heard enough to know what was going on, or what Danelli had done if anything.

All he knew was that Danelli's man, Mingo, had searched George Winters's apartment, not looking for anything, like an insurance card, but checking to be sure nothing bad was there.

Shayne lit a cigarette and sat in his car in the late Miami Beach sunlight. What he had heard at the warehouse had sounded as if Danelli wasn't actually involved with George Winters, but was connected to someone who was—Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones had some problem that involved George Winters, and Danelli had enough connection to 'Mr. Jones' to be worried about exposure and trouble. But what connection, and who was Mr. Jones? It had all the ring of a phony name, a label for getting in touch. He had a hunch that maybe Danelli himself didn't know who Mr. Jones really was.

It all led back to George Winters

and his apartment, and the reason why he had been killed—if he had. Suicide still wasn't ruled out. But Shayne had found too much going on to think Winters had really killed himself now.

Somewhere, somehow, there was an answer in the life and apartment of George Winters. An answer Lorna Mercer maybe knew without even knowing she knew.

And where was she?

Shayne didn't like the way she was missing, the way someone had cleaned up her apartment and forgotten to lock the door.

He started up his car and drove off the short mile toward George Winters's apartment. Maybe Lorna Mercer was there. Maybe she was hiding, scared and unaware of why she was important.

He was thinking about Lorna Mercer as he swung into the quiet street where George Winters had died. He saw the parked car out of the corner of his eyes as he passed and started to slow to stop at George Winters's apartment.

A movement in the parked car caught his eye.

A quick movement he saw almost by some sixth sense he had grown over the years.

He reacted by the reflex of his years of danger.

He ducked down, swung the wheel left, hit the gas so the car jumped ahead—all in the split second that he saw the movement, and

he glint of sunlight on something metallic.

The silent shots smashed the right side window and the windshield as they missed and went out through the front.

Two shots like a hoarse animal pitting: *Ptt! Ptt!*

Shayne stayed down, steering above him by instinct, slowing the car and grabbing for his automatic.

He got the automatic out and raised up.

The parked car was still there behind him.

Pttt!

Pttt!

His rear window shattered. Something seemed to sing past his left ear.

He raised his automatic to fire.

His car lurched, hit hard, and he was hurled out through the door that opened on the left side.

He landed on his shoulder and felt the wrenching jar. But he felt nothing break, and rolled and came up with his hand grasping for the automatic that was gone from his hand now.

He saw the automatic ten yards away in the evening sun.

His car lay half on its side where it had hit a parked car.

Horns were blowing.

People were running up.

Shayne looked across the ten yards to his pistol, and looked to the parked car.

The car moved.

In the distance a police siren was growing loud.

Shayne crawled toward the automatic.

The parked car pulled out and gunned its engine.

Shayne looked up, saw the car and the man behind the wheel, a man with no face. A black bag where the face should be, masked.

Shayne was still ten feet from the automatic when his sixth sense told him what the attacker was going to do. He jumped up, feinted a dash for the automatic, then flung himself backwards to the street.

The car, going at full speed now, roared over where the automatic was, where Shayne would have been.

Missing, the car with the masked driver swayed, skidded, sideswiped another parked car, regained control, and was gone around the first corner in a scream of burning rubber.

Shayne sat in the street. People stood around looking at the red-head, at the automatic out in the street, at Shayne's wrecked and bullet-riddled car, and at the two other smashed cars that made the quiet street look like a battlefield.

After a time, Shayne stood up, retrieved his pistol and waited for the police.

XII

HIS CAR HAD been towed away, and Lucy Hamilton had come with

another and gone home again. Mike Shayne was not hurt, only bruised. The police had taken his report, and warned him that Chief Painter would want to see him soon.

"Sure," Shayne said. "Has he got anything on that question I asked him to look into?"

"I wouldn't know about that," one cruise car man said.

"We're just flatfeet," the other patrolman said.

"Just come in soon, Mr. Shayne, Okay? We know about the Chief and you."

"I'll be in," Shayne said.

"Be careful," the second patrolman said. "We got no trace of that car that hit at you."

Then Shayne was alone with his bruises and his thoughts.

Who?

Who had tried to kill him, expertly, coldly. And why? What did he know? Or did he know anything? Maybe it was just that someone didn't want any investigation of the death of George Winters.

How was he going to find the answer?

In the apartment where George Winters had died? There wasn't anywhere else to look. Where was Lorna Mercer? Up there in that apartment? There was nowhere else to look.

Shayne limped out of the street and into the lobby of George Winters's apartment house. He waited for the elevator this time. There was no hurry; he didn't even know

what he hoped to find. When the elevator came, he watched the door open cautiously, but the car was empty. He rode up to the fifth floor, wary again as the door sighed open.

He stepped out in the hall. It was empty.

Relieved, Shayne walked down to 5-A and tried the door. It was locked. He took out his key that fitted, opened the door, stepped in and closed it behind him.

A man sat on the couch looking directly at Shayne.

The redhead froze, and his hand started like a snake for his automatic in its shoulder holster. He stopped without drawing his gun.

The man on the couch was small and thin and sat with his hands folded in his lap like a schoolboy. In the fading light of evening, the man's blue eyes looked as innocent as a child's eyes. His feet barely touched the floor. His voice was soft, yet firm.

"Are you the private detective who thinks that George Winters was murdered?"

Shayne watched the little man. The question had all the ring of innocence. Yet?

"What makes you think anyone thinks George Winters was murdered?"

"Oh, I heard. My wife told me, you see. She has ways of finding out things."

"Who are you?"

"Are you the private detective?" the little man insisted.

Shayne's hand hovered close to his pistol. "Yeah, I'm the private detective."

"Good," the little man said. "I'm Malcolm Frey. I have some information that might help you. Or, to be precise, my wife has the information. She doesn't wish to reveal herself to the police, so she sent me to find you."

"Just who the hell is your wife? She wouldn't be Lorna Mercer, would she?"

"Lorna Mercer? Heavens, no! My wife is an entirely different type of woman, Mr.—Shayne, is it?"

"Yes."

"Of course," Malcolm Frey nodded. "Well, my Phyllis isn't at all like Miss Mercer. Indeed, no. Miss Mercer is hard and brittle and not very much of a lady. Not that I have anything against her, you understand."

"But you know her? Where is she?"

"Miss Mercer? Why, I have no idea. I've only seen her once. My wife knows her better. They were, I guess, rivals, but that is ended now."

"Rivals? You mean—" Shayne stared at the little man perched so primly on the couch.

"That my wife and Miss Mercer were rivals for George Winters?" Malcolm Frey said calmly. "Yes, indeed. That is exactly what I mean. Poor Phyllis was smitten terrible

with the man. So, I gather, was Miss Mercer. A magnetic man, George Winters. It was a terrible thing for poor Phyllis, but we did our best to make it as tolerable as possible."

"We?" Shayne said. "You helped your wife suffer being in love with George Winters? I mean, you weren't jealous?"

"Jealous? Oh, yes, I was awfully jealous. You see, I love Phyllis very much. I love her much too much to hurt her, or see her hurt. It wasn't her fault she was so insanely attracted to Winters. It was something we had to try to handle together. I thought it was working rather well. She was getting over it, and then—then this had to happen. Phyllis is sure that Winters was murdered. She's crazy to catch who killed him."

"And she has some information?"

"So she thinks."

"Where do I meet her?"

"Oh, you shan't meet her, Mr. Shayne. I want her kept out of all this entirely. But she told me what she feels she knows, and I came to tell you."

"Okay, tell me," Shayne said, and sat down in the growing gloom of the evening apartment. He watched the odd little man. Malcolm Frey was either a very good man, a very bad man, or the best con artist Shayne had ever seen. Maybe all three.

"Well," Frey began, "about three

days ago my wife and Winters went to a party. She joined him outside, of course. He never came to my home. I do draw the line."

"I understand," Shayne said.

"I'm sure you don't, but I live my own life," Frey said gently. "Anyway, they went to this party. It was a rather unsavory affair from what Phyllis tells me, with unpleasant types and a great deal of drinking, gambling, and chasing women. I believe there were nude dancers, and very coarse types and language."

"I know the kind of party," Shayne said.

"Yes, I expect you do," Frey said. "As the party progressed, everyone, including the host, became quite drunk. Phyllis begged George to take her home—to his place, of course—but he was having too much fun gambling with the host. So Phyllis said she was leaving alone. She went to the room where her coat was and got it. George came after her. While they were arguing, the host appeared, Phyllis says. He was very drunk.

"He observed George trying to make Phyllis stay, and when Phyllis was adamant, the host laughed uproariously and told George if he was going to chase difficult 'dames' he needed some insurance. This host then threw a card at George. A business card. George picked it up, laughed and put it into his pocket.

"He then persuaded Phyllis to stay a little while—just one good

roll, as he said—and she did. It was then that Phyllis noticed the two men watching George. They were very grim, she says. They went to the drunken host and whispered to him. Phyllis says she saw him look through his wallet.

"Just about at that point, George won a series of games with the dice, and he came and got Phyllis and they left. When they were in his car, Phyllis says she pointed out the two grim men who were coming toward the car. George became very pale, and drove away fast. That was the last time Phyllis saw George."

"He took her home with him?"

"No, he didn't. He drove to where our car was parked, and told her get home, get away, and stay away from him for a time."

Shayne slowly rubbed at his jaw. The insurance card. It had to be. Somehow that insurance card and its message—was dangerous. And George Winters knew what danger the card was.

"Do you know who the men were who came after George that night?"

"No, except one of them she had heard called Jones."

"Can you describe him?"

"No, I wasn't there, of course. My wife can't describe him either. She said she never did get a look at his face."

"Who was the host? The one who threw the card to George?"

"A man named Danelli. Some kind of criminal, I believe."

"You believe right," Shayne said. "Okay, Mr. Frey, and thanks. You maybe gave me what I needed."

"I do hope so. Phyllis is terribly broken up. She knows her affair is over, but she wants his killer caught. She's sure it has something to do with the card that night, and with Mr. Danelli."

"Yeah," Shayne said. "I'm getting to be sure myself. And this may be the clincher."

"Well, I'll leave you to solve it then. I'm pleased to have met you," Malcolm Frey said. The little man stood, bowed, and walked out with his head high, dignified.

Shayne watched him go. He had a funny feeling—he wouldn't like to tangle against Malcolm Frey if Frey had reason to think he, Shayne was going to hurt Phyllis Frey. An odd little man, and a man who would be a dangerous enemy.

XIII

MIKE SHAYNE stopped to call Peter Painter. It was dusk now, the last glow of the sun setting in the west behind the gaudy towers of Miami Beach. It had been a long day, but Shayne was fired up now. Torre Danelli was in this up to his neck, and Lorna Mercer was still not home.

"What is it, Shayne?" Painter snapped irritably. "Where did you



get that place, time and the date?"

"It means something? What I wanted to know?"

"That depends," Painter snapped.

"Maybe it does."

"Tell me."

"First tell me where you got it," Painter growled.

"Not yet. Play my way. Maybe you'll solve a murder, and maybe get Torre Danelli," Shayne said.

There was a silence at the other end of the line. Then Painter's cold voice. "You have any proof of anything against Danelli?"

"No, just that message I gave you."

"You can connect it to Danelli?" Painter asked?

"Maybe."

Another silence. "You better do

a lot more than maybe, Shayne. At 9:00 a.m. on January 10th, a Thursday, in the Woodson Building, a man we know was a messenger for Sam Vitale of the Cleveland Mafia family was gunned down in a men's room. No witnesses, except maybe fifty people in the corridor who saw nothing. No suspects, except word had it that Torre Danelli wanted the messenger dead."

"But no proof against Danelli?"

"Not a hair. Alibi as tight as Fort Knox. We know he had the hit made, but we can't prove anything. All his hit men have perfect alibis too. I know none of his men did it."

"Then who did?"

"We don't know, Shayne, but we've got a kind of rumor going around the last year—that there's a minor-league Murder, Inc. operating in town. You know the game—contract killers for hire to do any job you want on anyone. Just paid murderers."

"Headed by a man named Jones, Painter?" Shayne said.

This time the silence was ominous. "Shayne, you come down here right now. You hear me? If you know about Mr. Jones, you better come down and tell me or I'll have your hide hung—"

Shayne hung up. The redhead was grinning. A grim grin, but still a grin. He could picture Peter Painter's apoplectic face. That was worth a grin. The thought of what

he was going to do next was what made the grin grim.

No one could be anything but grim when they were about to go up against Torre Danelli.

In his car Shayne drove first to the bus depot, where he checked the business card of J. Dudley Burns in a locker and hid the key under a trash basket that was almost empty.

Then he took his automatic out of his holster and left it in the glove compartment of his car with his second gun.

He thought of trying the warehouse, but Danelli would have abandoned that by now after this morning. No, there was only one course—walk right in on Danelli at home—open and unarmed.

It didn't take long to find the big house in the exclusive section of Miami where Torre Danelli lived in open splendor much liked by his wealthy neighbors who refused to believe who and what he was.

At the gate a uniformed man greeted the redhead. "Yes, sir?"

"Mike Shayne to see Mr. Danelli."

"Does he expect you, sir?"

"No, but he knows me. Tell him I saw him at the warehouse."

"Very well, sir," the uniformed front said.

Shayne waited. He sensed eyes on him. The uniformed gateman was for the legitimate callers, but with Torre Danelli a hood would not be

far away. The gateman came back and opened the gate.

"Mr. Danelli says drive up to the house. Someone will meet you."

Shayne drove up to the house. He didn't doubt that someone would meet him. It was Mingo. So Danelli was serious.

"Out," Mingo said.

Shayne got out. No one was playing games for his benefit. The heavy gunman frisked him, stepped back.

"The Boss said you was a smart peeper, no gun," Mingo said. "Okay, walk in. First door right."

Shayne walked into the first door on the right. Torre Danelli stood up and stared at him. A big man, Danelli, to match his big, deep voice Shayne now recognized as the voice in the warehouse.

"What have you got, Shayne?" Danelli said.

"A question. Who killed George Winters?"

Danelli laughed. "You always had a hard nose. "Okay, I don't know who killed Winters—the truth. And you can't tie me into it."

"Can I tie you into the Woodson Building, January 10th?"

Danelli didn't flinch a hair. "No, you can't. I'm clean. If I wasn't you wouldn't walk out of here alive."

"Yes I would. You don't know where I've got it—the card."

"What card?"

"The one you gave time and place for the hit on when you hired Mr. Jones."

"I don't know any Mr. Jones, peeper," Danelli said.

"How about Lorna Mercer? Where is she?"

"Lorna? How should I know? Maybe she knocked off George, eh? Sure, a tough cookie, Lorna. Maybe she took it on the run. Hell, Lorna's a dame'd kill a two-timer like Winters for the rings on his fingers."

Mingo laughed behind Shayne. "She'd knock off a jerk like Winters for less than that. Those rings he wears are worth plenty."

Danelli said, "You got nothing, Shayne. Only take a tip. If you got Mr. Jones against you, be careful where you walk."

"I thought you never heard of Mr. Jones?"

"No, I never said that," Danelli said calmly. "I said I didn't know a Mr. Jones, and I don't. I heard of him. I never seen him."

But Shayne had stopped listening. Something rang in his head like a gong. Something he didn't have to fight to recall, no. It was staring at him like a picture in a spotlight—George Winters's rings, jewelry!

"Maybe I made a mistake, Danelli: I'll be in touch," he said, and turned to go.

Mingo blocked his way. "Don't keep in touch with us, shamus, we'll keep in touch with you. Remember that."

Shayne pushed past the heavy hood and walked out the door, his back crawling with the cold eyes on it. But nothing happened, and he

got into his car. He drove off fast. He had to find Lorna Mercer now. He had a question to ask—one big question.

XIV

LORNA MERCER'S apartment was still dark. Mike Shayne went up fast. He got no answer. He opened the door, stepped inside, and he found Lorna Mercer. He found her, his client, but he didn't ask her his one question.

She wasn't going to answer any question. Not now, not ever.

She lay on her back on the floor, spread out like a victim tied in the sun for the ants to eat. She was very dead, and there were no ants, but whoever had killed her had thought of other tricks to cause pain.

The detective bent over the dead woman. She was cold, with medium rigor. She'd been dead at least six hours, or not too long after she had left his office this morning. He was running far behind someone.

He looked at the dead woman's feet. They were black, burned. A blow torch, from the look of it. A blow torch applied to her feet in slow stages. To make her talk. Why?

Other tortures had been used. Why?

Shayne could think of only one answer, and that was his hunch, the hunch he'd gotten from Danelli. And he had to know. He left the

apartment to its dead owner, and ran back down to his car. He drove fast to Miami Beach Police Headquarters.

He burst into Peter Painter's office. "I want to look at the body of George Winters again!"

"I want to hear what you think you—" Painter began.

"You want to catch Mr. Jones? Maybe Danelli?"

Painter glared, stood up. "Okay, look at the body."

Shayne followed Painter out into the corridor, and along to the morgue. The bored attendant began his slow routine of card checking and filling out.

Painter roared: "Get the body, you stupid moron!"

The attendant jumped as if shot, his face pale before Painter's wrath. He trotted ahead of Shayne and the Chief to the crypt drawer, and pulled it open. Shayne stood and looked down at the dead man who was the exact image of his brother.

"Look at his hands," Shayne said.

Painter looked. "So? What the devil do you want me to look at? I see two hands, good hands, tanned. What else?"

"The fingers, Painter. Look at the marks."

"There aren't any marks!" Painter roared in fury.

"Yeah, no marks at all," Shayne said. "This guy never wore a ring in his life. If he had the fingers would show it because they're so tanned."

"So he never wore rings, so what? We didn't find any rings."

Shayne said, "George Winters always wore rings. He had a box full of rings, cuff links, tie clips in his drawer. Torre Danelli talked about his rings—good rings, expensive. So did Lorna Mercer, I missed it before. This guy never wore rings at all. They weren't just taken off his hand. There were no rings. No never!"

Painter stood quietly for a moment. "You're saying that this isn't George Winters?"

"No, it isn't George Winters. It's the spitting image, but it's not him. It's his brother, Paul."

Painter seemed to grow even smaller. "You're telling me that this is Paul Winters? That his wife let us think it was George?"

"His wife and his brother both. Agnes Winters is even playing along that George is her husband. It's George living there with her, and George who came to identify his own body. Somehow, Paul was killed by mistake—and that takes care of your suicide theory."

"Why? Why say it's George when it's Paul who was killed?" Painter asked.

"Because whoever had reason to kill George Winters would still want to kill him if he knew he had killed the wrong man. So George, coming home that night and finding his brother getting killed by mistake, did the only smart thing he could do—he went to his sister-in-law



and cooked up the deal to pretend to be Paul."

"And the wife went along?"

"Why not? Her husband was dead. What could she do by not going along?"

"That way George maybe stays safe," Painter said. "Okay, I see it."

"Yeah," Shayne said. "Maybe he stays safe, and maybe not. Come on, Painter. I've got a hunch George won't stay safe long, if it isn't too late already."

"Someone else tumbled, Painter. Someone else guessed about Paul being dead, and not George, faster than I did. But to be sure, and maybe find out where George was, he grabbed Lorna Mercer, tortured

her and then killed her. I've got a hunch Lorna had found out that George was alive, too, and if she had we may be too late already."

"Then stop gabbing, and let's go!" Painter snarled.

The dapper little Chief of detectives led Shayne out of the morgue at a trot and out to his car. Painter barked some sharp orders, and four of his men piled into the other cars within seconds. Moments later all four cars were racing out of Miami Beach to the modest tract house of Paul Winters.

There was light in the house. Painter strode up to the door as fast as his short legs would take him. He rang. Shayne stood behind him.

There was no answer.

"Damn," Painter swore.

"Ring again," Shayne said.

Painter rang again.

There was still no answer.

"Wait!" Shayne said.

Somewhere inside the house they heard light footsteps. They were hesitant footsteps, coming very slowly toward the door. Just inside the door the footsteps stopped as if someone were standing there afraid to move any closer.

"Mrs. Winters?" Shayne said.

Silence.

"Mrs. Winters, it's Mike Shayne and Chief Painter. Open up! We know, Mrs. Winters. We know about Paul."

Another silence, and then, as if from a long distance away, a deep,

light sigh dragged from a heavy heart. The footsteps came closer to the door, and the door opened. Agnes Winters stood there holding a glass of whisky, looking almost dead, she was so pale.

"You know?" she said.

"Yes," Shayne said. "Where is he?"

The woman seemed not to hear. She stepped back. "Come in then. You know, I don't have to hide anymore. I can cry for Paul now."

"Mrs. Winters—" Painter began.

The woman didn't turn. She led them into the same study and then sat down. She looked up at them. "He went to visit George. Paul did, I mean. He didn't do that often. But that night he went to ask George for some money. He didn't like to do that, but I need an operation, and Paul never has—never had made much money. I never minded that. Paul was a good, gentle man. I—"

She stopped, blinked, and seemed to look around as if wondering where she was. "George wasn't home. Paul went so late to be sure George would be home, but he wasn't. Paul was determined to talk to him. We've always had a key, George gave it to us. I suppose they were waiting for Paul when he walked in. I don't know."

She stopped again, and Painter made an impatient move as if about to speak. Shayne stopped him. The redhead shook his head. It was obvious that now, talking about it

all, the woman had gone into some kind of shock, and would tell the story her own way or go silent. Shayne looked at his watch. Agnes Winters began to rock in her chair like a mother mourning for a dead baby.

"He must have walked in, and—I I don't know. George said when he came home he saw his door was unlocked. He heard voices. He knew one of the voices. Some man named Mingo. That's a strange name. He says he didn't know Paul was in there. He didn't hear Paul. Paul must have been unconscious."

She blinked again at them all, unseeing. "George hid out in the corridor. He was scared. He tried to hear what the men were saying. He says he heard the name Mr. Jones and then he knew they were there to kill him.

"He went down the stairs. Just as he got downstairs he heard the crash of glass and then a scream and he saw Paul fall. He knew it was Paul. He knew Paul was dead and that those men would kill him when they found out they'd killed the wrong man. So he ran. He ran to me. He told me what had happened. He begged me to let them think he was dead, pretend that he was Paul. He was Paul's brother, Paul was dead, what else could I do?"

"Nothing, Mrs. Winters," Shayne said. "You couldn't do anything. But now we think the killers know they got the wrong man. We think

they're looking for George. We've got to get to him first. Where is he, Agnes?"

She looked up at them. "I don't know where he is."

Painter swore. "You've got to tell us, damn it!"

"He left," Agnes Winters said. "He went out. I think to find that Mercer woman. Then he came back. He was terrible. He was terrified. He packed a bag. There was a man across the street, so he left the back—"

"A man!" Shayne said.

"What man?" Painter cried.

Shayne and Painter looked at Agnes Winters.

XV

AGNES WINTERS shook her head slowly. "I don't know what man. He wasn't big. I never saw his face. He just stood there like a statue watching the house. He never came in."

"When did he leave? When George did?" Shayne asked.

"No, George was gone over an hour before he left. A car came, and he got inside and left. That was all."

"Did George see the man?"

"Yes, it made him so scared he almost fainted. George, the big brave gambler!"

"But the man stayed after George left?"

"Yes."

"Then George must have gotten

away," Painter said. "But they've still got a hell of a head start on us, Shayne. If it's Danelli behind this, and it sure sounds like it, there aren't many ways a man like George Winters can escape Torre Danelli in Miami."

"Danelli's in it," Shayne said grimly, "but I don't think he's the key man. I think the man who attacked me in my car is Mr. Jones—a hired killer, cold and ruthless, Painter. I think Danelli hired Mr. Jones to make the hit on that Cleveland messenger, and Danelli isn't scared of you police, he's scared of the Cleveland family of the brotherhood. If Mr. Jones gets caught, he'll talk. That's how he's getting Torre to help him get George."

"Okay, but where is George Winters?" Painter said. "We've got nothing to go on. Where do we look for him in Miami, Mrs. Winters?"

Agnes Winters shook her head. "I don't know."

"Lorna Mercer is dead," Shayne said, "and I think George knows that. He went there before me and saw her."

"Hamish Coors?" Painter said.

"Hell, Hamish doesn't hide a two-bit gambler from the likes of Torre Danelli. He hates Danelli, but that'd be too risky, especially with Mr. Jones in the picture."

"Unless Hamish is Mr. Jones," Painter said grimly.

"He could be. Hamish would do anything for a dollar," Shayne said,

"and he's got the men. No, George wouldn't go to Hamish. He'd have to go somewhere he was sure Mingo or anyone else wouldn't think about, somewhere they didn't know."

"Or maybe just keep running," Painter said. "He's a scared rabbit, and rabbits run."

Shayne shook his head, "No, George is scared but he's not a fool. He knows what he's up against. He knows they know he's alive. He knows they'd be watching all the ways out of Miami, and Torre Danelli has an arm that reaches everywhere. No, Painter, he's holed up. He has to be. But where?"

Agnes Winters sat in the silence as Painter and Shayne tried to think, suddenly her head came up, her lip curled, and she said, "Look for the woman. That's where George would hole up. The women, they always help George, no matter what he does. Look at me. My Paul was dead, and I helped the man who really got him killed. I let him live here, act as my husband, share my bed, and yet I hated him. Why did I do it? Women! Some woman, that's where George Winters is"

Painter swore, "Damn it, we could take ten years finding all his women."

Shayne was staring into space, his gray eyes down to hard steel points. He looked like a man seeing a vision. He turned to face Painter with a sudden gleam in his steely eyes.

"A woman, yes. And no, too. Mingo, this Mr. Jones, whoever he is, they'd know all George's women, or they'd find out fast. They know all about George Winters. But there's one woman who'd help him, and who might be safe."

"Who, damn it, Shayne!" Painter growled.

"Phyllis Frey," Shayne said, and told the dapper little Chief about his meeting with Malcolm Frey.

"But, hell, she was at Danelli's party!" Painter protested. "If they'd know anyone, they'd know her."

"Sure, but would they know about the husband?" Shayne said. "Would they know about Malcolm Frey? No, I don't think so. Men like Danelli and Mingo would never dream of a husband who lets his wife have an affair, and neither George nor Phyllis Frey would have been likely to talk about her husband."

"You mean you think this Malcolm Frey, the husband of a woman Winters was playing with, would help Winters?"

Shayne nodded. "You don't know Malcolm Frey. That's just what he'd do, if his wife asked him to, and she would if George went to her still alive."

Agnes Winters nodded suddenly. "Yes, yes. He said he knew a man who was as good as he was rotten. A real good man who would help even a snake."

"That's it then!" Shayne said.

Painter whirled to his men. "Get

Malcolm Frey's address, and get it fast. Right now. Move. Come on, Shayne."

The little Chief went out on the run with Shayne right behind him. In the cars they waited while Painter's men worked over the radio. Shayne smoked, Painter tapped like a nervous cat on the window, waiting.

"Here it is, Chief," a sergeant said, running up. "Malcolm Frey, 220 Pelham Way. That's in Miami Beach. He's the only Malcolm Frey."

"Let's go," Painter snapped.

The four cars drove off, leaving only two men to watch the house of the dead Paul Winters.

XVI

AT 220 PELHAM WAY the house was dark. Mike Shayne swore. Then Painter pointed to the car in the garage.

"The front door's open," Painter said.

"You take the back," Mike Shayne said.

With one of Painter's men, the redhead moved up toward the open front door with his automatic drawn. Nothing moved inside the house. He heard a faint whistle from the rear. Painter had found nothing either.

The redhead moved through the open door. He stopped and listened. There was no sound.

Then, "Shayne!" Painter's man said softly.

Shayne heard it. A low, distant moaning sound. But it wasn't distant, it was just faint and muffled. Shayne headed for a rear room. The door was closed and the faint moaning came from behind the closed door.

Shayne motioned Painter's man to be ready, and he kicked the door open. He jumped in, crouched, his pistol held in both hands so that it could be aimed with his body alone.

The room was dark and empty.

"There," Painter's man hissed.

A shape lay on the floor behind the couch. Shayne bent down over the shape. It was a woman. Shayne didn't have to guess who the woman was.

"Mrs. Frey?" he said low. "Can you talk?"

Phyllis Frey moaned. Her eyes opened. Eyes that were full of pain.

"He—he went with George."

Shayne said, "Who? Who went with George?"

"He—Malcolm—went—"

Painter was there. The Chief squatted down beside the injured woman. "Who hurt you?"

"Don't know. Beat me. I told—God, I told—"

Painter was working over the woman. Now he looked up at Shayne, his eyes puzzled. "She's beaten pretty hard, but not serious. No bones broken. No torture."

Shayne said, "Malcolm went with

George Winters, then some man came and beat you to find out where they went?"

Phyllis Frey nodded. Her eyes were open now. "George came. He begged me to get Malcolm to hide him. I asked Malcolm. He agreed, Malcolm did. They left. Then—then he came, a masked man, and he beat me. He came, only minutes after they left."

"Minutes?" Shayne said, and his gray eyes gleamed as he thought. He thought about the little Malcolm, and about the small, silent man across the street from Paul Winters's house. No one knew who Mr. Jones was.

"Where did Malcolm take George?" Shayne asked.

"Beach house," Phyllis Frey said through her bruised lips. "He has a beach house, a shack, Malcolm does. He goes there to be alone. Often. Sometimes for days. To think. It's quiet, remote, on a deserted shore."

"Where?" Shayne snapped.

"Togo Beach. South. The Wade Cottage."

Painter said, "The ambulance'll be here in a few minutes. I'll leave one man, and he can follow us."

Shayne nodded. Outside they got into two cars. Painter led the way south toward Togo Beach.

It was close to midnight when they reached Togo Beach and got directions for the Wade Cottage.

"Who beat on the Frey woman, Shayne?" Painter asked as they drove

through the dark sea night toward the sound of surf. They had changed cars in Togo Beach, Shayne and Painter together now.

"I don't know. Maybe Mingo," Shayne said.

"Or Mr. Jones," Painter said. "It was awful quick, right? Minutes after Malcolm and George left, she said. Just minutes."

"Yeah," Shayne said.

"Maybe George Winters is already dead," Painter said. "Maybe we find this shack empty."

"I don't know, Painter," Shayne said.

They said nothing more, each wrapped in his own thoughts as they drove on with Shayne's car and the second police car behind them, now that the man they had left with Phyllis Frey had caught up with them.

They stopped in the pitch dark night a half a mile down the dirt road from the Wade Cottage. There was no light in the cottage. Shayne and one detective went right along the beach. Painter and the second detective went along the road. They made no sound as they moved up in the night toward the deserted cottage where a single car stood in front.

Shayne reached the edge of the dark house first. He crouched, motioned the detective behind him to get down and be quiet. His gun ready, the redhead rose to move.

The shots split the night with a flash of flame.



Shayne hit the dirt, rolled.

The shots had come from the shack. Shayne fired back at where he had seen the flame.

A dark shape hurled out of the shadows of the porch and dove into the sand. The figure rolled, came up firing.

Shayne heard a sharp grunt behind him. The detective had been hit.

"Bad?" Shayne yelled, rolled away from where he had shouted.

Two more shots tore the night, kicked up sand where Shayne had been.

"No, leg," the detective said from the dark. "I see him, left!"

Shayne saw him, a thick shape

etched against the lighter sky where it touched the land. A figure framed in palm trees, up now and running.

"Stop!" Shayne yelled.

For answer the heavy figure turned and fired. Wild shots. The figure started to run again. Shayne squeezed off two careful shots and the figure vanished in a spray of dark sand and a high, agonized scream.

The night was suddenly silent again.

Painter appeared at the corner of the cottage. "Get him?"

"I think so," Shayne said.

Cautiously, Shayne and Painter approached the fallen man who lay on the sand like only a darker patch against the silvery ground. The two other detectives continued to watch the house. Shayne bent and turned over the man he had shot.

"Mingo," Shayne said.

Both the redhead and Painter looked down at the heavy-faced gunman. Mingo had his gun still gripped in his hand. He was dead. Both Shayne's shots had hit him in the chest. He had died as he had lived with a gun in his hand.

"Damn," Shayne swore. "I wanted him alive."

"You don't take men like Mingo alive if—"

The two men looked at each other. Mingo had come out of the cottage shooting.

"Inside," Painter growled.

They went up to the porch, and inside, moving very warily. But

nothing happened. Nothing moved inside the cottage. But the place wasn't empty.

George Winters lay on the floor, his dead eyes staring up at all he had wanted and had never gotten.

XVII

PETER PAINTER straightened up in the dark cottage. "Shot three times, Shayne, but not with that gun Mingo had. A small gun, .32 Caliber I'd say. Mingo had an automatic, .45 caliber."

"A .32?" Mike Shayne said. "A hidden gun, a killer's close weapon. Not too much sound, easy to silence."

Painter nodded. "Powder burns all over; he was shot real close. That's the way they do it, paid killers—up close against the man, the shot muffled and silenced, no misses."

One of the detectives came up. "No one else. But there's footprints in the sand of a small man going that way."

They went out of the house, all alert. The moon was rising now, and in the bright path of silver light they saw the trail of small footprints going off toward the ocean. Shayne pointed.

"Two sets of prints, Painter. The others are a big man. Or a man with big feet for his size."

"Let's go," Painter said.

They fanned out now in a military-like form

the beach toward the ocean, Shayne in the center. The other detective to his right, and a little behind to cover. The wounded detective stayed with the dead George Winters.

In the silver glow of the moonlight nothing moved on the empty beach. The palm trees swayed in the light breeze blowing gently from the sea.

The tracks led straight on down the beach—the small man and the bigger man. One set of tracks partly over the other. The two men had not walked together, but it was impossible to tell who had gone first.

They walked on, and in the night Shayne thought of lone patrols on the Pacific islands of the war, the soldiers grim and silent as they followed the trail of the deadly enemy.

Painter stopped. He pointed to the ground. Shayne looked.

"The big man went first, Shayne. The little man behind him. It's obvious from these tracks."

Shayne only nodded. He thought of Malcolm Frey, a strange, odd little man. A *little* man, and Shayne already had sensed that Frey was a grim, deadly, dangerous enemy. A cool, precise little man who was a lot more than he seemed to be. Cold and nerveless, following exactly what he believed he had to do and nothing else.

The three of them were looking down at the tracks, and looking out into the distance where the tracks went on.

"We won't catch him now," Pain-

ter said. "You think it's Mr. Jones?"

"Yeah," Shayne said. "Jones and maybe Torre Danelli himself is the big man, he'd have been with Mingo to be sure George Winters got dead."

"Then maybe Danelli's dead," Painter said, "the little man is stalking him."

"Maybe. Let's go on a few—"

The soft, spitting sound broke out of the palms to the left.

Ptttt! And, again, *Ptttt—Ptttt!* Painter fell flat.

The other detective clawed at sand.

Shayne went over on his left side with his gun held steady in his right hand and aimed at the palm trees.

But in the moonlight they were dead pigeons, sitting ducks.

They lay etched like black patches in a silver sea, and the palm trees were dark and invisible.

"We got to run!" Painter cried.

"Go!" the other detective yelled.

It was a risk, to run in the open, but it was suicide to stay where they were. All this went through their minds in a split second. Shayne was up, ready to race for the ocean itself.

Ptttt! Ptttt!

Sand kicked at his feet. The next shot . . . two shots.

They were loud, the two sudden shots, like the explosion of a cannon after the spitting of the silenced shots.

A scream of pain split the silvery night.

Shayne, Painter and the third detective all stood crouched above the sand, frozen like statues that couldn't move. Their eyes watched the dark palms.

A figure appeared. A small, thin figure carrying something large and black in both hands.

The little figure walked slowly, quietly down the beach toward them holding the large pistol in both hands down before him.

"It's Malcolm Frey," Shayne whispered.

Painter raised his pistol to fire at the man.

"No," Shayne said. "No. Wait!"

Painter looked at the redhead. Shayne was watching Malcolm Frey approach. The little man stopped some five feet away. He looked calmly at Shayne, and then down at the big pistol in his hands.

"He was ambushing you," Malcolm Frey said. "He killed George Winters in the cottage. I hid. I followed him. He beat my wife. I heard him say to George, you see? It was only chance I was outside the cabin when they came, and I followed him. I found this gun that George had brought.

"I followed him and I saw him walk far along the beach, and then come back. It was an ambush. I was a soldier, you see? They taught me well. I was small, so they made me a special Ranger. I know how to spot an ambush. I hid, and when he fired, I had to kill him before he killed you. I mean, he killed George,

and Phyllis will cry. He beat my Phyllis."

Painter took the heavy pistol from Frey. Shayne walked up the beach toward the dark palm trees. The detective of Painter's stayed with Malcolm Frey. Painter followed Shayne into the trees.

The man lay on his back, dead. He had been shot twice at close range with deadly accuracy. His face was masked as Shayne had seen it in the car that had attacked him. Painter bent and removed the mask.

"Torre Dannelli himself," Painter said.

Shayne just looked down at the dead Mafia boss.

"Danelli himself," Shayne said. "He was Mr. Jones. The Boss himself was Mr. Jones. There was no real Mr. Jones."

XVIII

IT WAS BRIGHT sunlight in Peter Painter's office when Malcolm Frey sat and told his story. They had cleared up all the details with the Togo Beach police and the State Police, and now they sat in Painter's office.

"Phyllis is okay," Painter said.

"I know," Malcolm Frey said. "Poor George, and that poor Miss Mercer."

"Tell us what George told you, Malcolm," Shayne said.

"Yes," the little man nodded. "That card wasn't important at all, not really. It was something else

George saw that night. He saw, heard, Danelli tell Mingo that Mr. Jones was a good idea, and they both laughed. George heard Mingo say that the families would go crazy looking for Mr. Jones. Mingo discovered George listening.

"George didn't know what he had heard at first. Then Danelli threw him that card. George knew about the messenger who had been killed. That was when he suddenly guessed that Danelli had invented Mr. Jones, that Mr. Jones didn't exist. And he knew that the card was both an attempt to throw him off, by implying that Danelli had given instructions to Mr. Jones on the card, and a way of marking George for death, and having a reasonable excuse to kill him. He had evidence."

Shayne said, "Danelli invented Mr. Jones, started the whole rumor of a small-time Murder, Inc., to give him a false cover for killing other Mafia men and gain real control of the whole brotherhood. He wanted a mysterious assassin no one could connect to him. He planned to kill off all his enemies without the Mafia council realizing who was doing the killing."

Painter nodded. "Pretty smart, but he blabbed where George Winters heard him and Mingo, and then he had to get George. He wasn't

so afraid of what George might do about us, the police, but he knew George was a man who wanted money bad, and maybe George would sell what he knew to the other Mafia bosses and ruin Danelli."

Malcolm Frey said, "George would have too. That was what he was so nervous and distraught about. He was trying to get up the nerve to go to the Mafia with what he knew."

"But Mingo and another of Danelli's hoods got to him first," Shayne said. "Or they got to Paul, and killed the wrong man."

"The card didn't mean anything?" Painter said.

"As J. Dudley Burns said," Shayne said, "Danelli just used a business card he had on hand to jot his fake note on, that's all."

"I hope he had paid-up insurance," Painter said drily. "Well, that's it. We solved it, Shayne, and maybe I'll overlook some of your high-handed actions this time."

"Thanks," Shayne said.

Malcolm Frey only smiled. Mike Shayne walked out of Painter's office with the little man. In Peter Painter's outer office the reporters were all waiting for the Chief to tell them how he had solved another case.

A NEW COMPLETE MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL NEXT MONTH

VINDICTIVE VITO GENOVESE: AMERICA'S CRIME BOSS

Spawned in Sicily, reared in Hell's Kitchen, a deadly little monster named Vito Genovese ravished and maimed and double-dealt his way to the Cosa Nostra's infamous summit—"The Boss of all Bosses." To know him was to know fear, to trust him meant ruin, to cross him meant inconceivably brutal death.

by DAVID MAZROFF



VITO GENOVESE was referred to throughout the dark haunts of the underworld as "Don Vitone—The Great One." He was great. He was very likely the greatest criminal mind in America's history, rivaling Al Capone, Johnny Torrio, and Lepke Buchalter who sliced their way to infamy with malice, mayhem, and murder.

When Genovese died in a federal prison medical center in Springfield, Missouri of congestive heart failure

on St. Valentine's Day in 1969, he was seventy-one years old. More than fifty years of his life had been spent in crime, even while he was confined behind bars.

Unlike Capone, Torrio, Buchalter, Luciano, and others of their ilk, Vito Genovese used a shield of mock respectability behind which to hide his criminal identity. He posed as a philanthropist, called himself a family man, declared he was loved and respected by his wife Anna, his

GANGDOM'S MOST FEARED KILLER—THE KING OF COSTA NOSTRA



daughter, Mrs. Nancy Simonetti, a teacher at St. Agnes' parochial school in New Jersey, his son Philip, and his brother Michael, a reputed captain in the Genovese Cosa Nostra "family."

By the same token, Al Capone also was known as a family man. He was also responsible for over a thousand murders in Chicago during the terrible decade when he ruled the Windy City with a gun in his hand. Tony Accardo, who succeeded Capone to power in Chicago, is also a family man. How many killings Accardo has been responsible for, personally and by order, is unknown but it may safely be said that they were many. While Capone and Torrio ruled Chicago, as did Accardo, and Lucky Luciano ruled a section of New York City, as did Lepke Buchalter, Vito Genovese ruled the nation's underworld and was called the *Capo dei Capi*, the "Boss of all Bosses."

How could an immigrant born in a small poverty-stricken town outside of Naples, reared on New York's Mulberry Street, a part of the East Side ghetto, rise to such power and prominence that he could command the toughest gang leaders in the world? How, from the depths of his dark and dreary heart and soul, could he engender such fear in other hoodlums and mobsters that they would come running to do his bidding when they received his call?

An illustration of his standing in the underworld is best drawn from

an incident that occurred in January 1949 when Genovese was the guest of honor at a fund raising affair for the Salvation Army, if you can imagine this, held at the famed Copacabana night club and restaurant at 10 East 60th Street in the center of New York City's most exclusive shops, hotels, and apartment buildings.

Present at the party were some ten judges, a borough president, a dozen or more Democratic and Republican district leaders, and an equal number of the top *mafiosi*. Leading the reception committee was none other than Frank Costello, the Prime Minister of the Underworld.

Vito Genovese timed his entrance into the Copa after all the invited guests had arrived and were seated. He was escorted by a trio of tough hoods whose expensive dinner jackets bulged suspiciously with shoulder holsters in which rested heavy-calibered pistols, just in case any ambitious hood decided to take a pot-shot at the boss in order to remove him from power.

Genovese paused inside the entrance to the Copa and surveyed the assembled guests, smiled vaguely and nodded to one and another of the men present as Frank Costello hastened to greet him.

A famed movie star or prima donna could not have made a more impressive entrance. Costello shook hands with Genovese, then led him into the large room and introduced him to the more important of the

guests, after which he led him to the chair of honor.

A quarter century before, one of the bloodiest hoods in Chicago's history, a man named Dion O'Bannion, boss of the near North Side, an ex-con, thief, bootlegger, heist-man, and killer, was equally honored at a dinner in which he was presented with a gold watch and a bronze plaque for services unknown. The dinner was attended by judges, state senators, high police officials, a representative from the mayor's office, and other politicians.

O'Bannion was murdered in his flower shop by three Capone hoods, one of them being Machine-Gun Jack McGurn, because of his somewhat distasteful habit of raiding Capone breweries and liquor drops. The killing set off a wave of murders on both sides which ended with the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, in which seven hoods were lined up against a wall and cut down with machine gun fire.

Other highly publicized hoods and gangsters have been honored by stage and screen stars, cafe entertainers, and athletes, among them Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, who consorted with dozens of movie stars, had one as a mistress, as well as the beautiful Countess Dorothy Di-Frasso and the tempestuous gun moll, Virginia Hill, all at one and the same time. But then Bugsy Siegel was as handsome as any of the movie stars he numbered among his friends.



VITO GENOVESE

Vito Genovese was far from the accepted image of the underworld thug. Not as handsome as Siegel, he was nevertheless a man of prepossessing appearance. Small in stature, regular featured, with smooth dark hair, well-set dark eyes, always immaculately attired, he looked the picture of a successful professional man.

What made Vito Genovese different from all the other hoods was the degree of motivation. All the other top hoods were motivated by two things, a fierce desire to escape the dregs of poverty and filth they had known as youths and a lust for the power that came with money.

Not so with Genovese. He was a

man of extraordinary force, a man to whom power was the greatest, most meaningful jewel, and he intended to attain it. He knew he could do it in but one way—murder. But murder alone was not enough. He added to his slayings deceptions and double crossings, killing the killers who had slain for him. That was how he rose to his fearsome power. This was the difference between his motivation and the motivations of other hoods.

He had absolutely no sense of loyalty toward any man, was unforgiving, cruel, vicious, as he rose up the ladder to the top of the nation's underworld. It was ultimately to turn his wife against him, expose him for what he was, as it was to turn trusted lieutenants against him, among them Joe Valachi, who became notorious as the stool pigeon who turned the heat on Cosa Nostra.

Vito Genovese was brought to the heart of Little Italy, the neighborhood around Mulberry Bend, in the summer of 1913. His father, Philipo, who came a year before, had worked himself up to become a small time contractor and then sent for his family when he had saved enough money for steerage passage.

Mulberry Bend was created for Vito Genovese for it was the filthy cradle of young hoodlums whose names had later been seared in blazing headlines in the country's newspapers. The notorious Five-Points Gang originated here and spawned Al Capone, Johnny Torrio,

Bugsy Siegel, Meyer Lansky, Lepke Buchalter, and Charlie "Lucky" Luciano, just to name a few. It was here that Luciano and Genovese met and became friends and partners.

The two boys—they were about seventeen at the time—were almost exactly the same age. Both had the same ambitions—to be big shots, carry bills of large denominations in their pockets, have high-powered broads as their mistresses, wear expensive clothes, and drive big cars.

Luciano took to peddling narcotics and Vito Genovese put a gun and a knife in his pocket and took to shaking down the peddlers in the street who sold their wares from pushcarts.

The two hoodlums, Genovese and Luciano, soon came to the attention of Ignazio Saietta, a murderous thug who barely escaped the carabinieri, Sicily's police, in 1899. He was wanted for some dozen murders and a score of other offenses, including rape.

Saietta, who became known as Lupo The Wolf, soon took over as the king of Mulberry Bend against the opposition of the Mafia, Black Hand, and the Camorra. He accomplished this by luring about fifty of his opponents to his "murder stable", a barn located at 334 E. 108th Street, and doing away with them in various ways, much as did the killers of Murder, Inc., when that ruthless and demoniac mob became the official exterminators for the underworld.

Saietta called in Luciano and Genovese, looked them over.

Physically, they weren't much. Genovese was about five feet six inches tall and weighed about 125 pounds. Luciano was a little taller but just as skinny. However, Saietta was aware of the fact, as he looked at the two young men, that stealth required no physical dimensions, and murder was a matter of inclination and motivation rather than brute strength.

"Sit down, boys," he said jovially, and pointed to two chairs. "Over there. That's right. Relax. I am your uncle, my boys. Uncle Ignazio." He clapped his hands together. "So! I have called you here in my home—" and he smiled graciously, as if he had bestowed the greatest of compliments upon his guests, "to welcome you into my family."

He clapped his hands together again. "My family, yes! That is good. I will make you rich and powerful."

He stood up and walked across the richly carpeted room. As he spoke of wealth and power Vito Genovese's eyes became bright and his mouth twitched. Wealth and power. The magic potion to release Genovese from poverty and want. From ignominy. From being a small extortionist of dimes and quarters. From being a lost nonentity.

Luciano's eyes were equally bright. He had expressed himself a dozen times over about not wanting to be a bum who jingled dimes together and believed himself rich, a

man who starved for recognition in a small world of crows and frogs, a world of diminishing concentric circles.

Genovese spoke first. "Mr. Saietta, I will do whatever you say, *anything*, if you will make me rich and powerful." His use of the personal pronoun escaped the perceptive young mind of Luciano. At the moment, Luciano was engrossed in the thought of his good fortune in having been called by Ignazio Saietta, *chosen* was the word in his mind, to join his family.

It was a family of thieves, thugs, gunmen, and murderers. However, Luciano selected for himself a place in the family that placed him above the mundane duties and actions of Saietta's family of common men. He was a leader, a lieutenant, a man who gave orders. He envisioned himself in the role, saw himself surrounded by splendor, by silks and satins, by beautiful women.

He clapped his hands together as Ignazio Saietta had done and a wondrous genie appeared to do his bidding. The world of money and power rolled through his mind in a geometric design flowered with all the colors of the rainbow. It was the most beautiful of worlds.

But Saietta was a pig. He was coarse. He was blunt. When he, Luciano, achieved the same position he would be smooth, polished, suave. He would wear the finest of clothes rather than the coarse material that made up Saietta's suit. The big dol-

lar meant the finest of everything, from food, drink, and environment to the most beautiful and delicate of women. That was his goal. Together with Genovese he would rise to the top.

That, however, was not in Genovese's mind. Genovese shoved everyone else aside in his mind, including Luciano. Genovese was the king. Genovese was the ruler. Genovese was Alexander The Great, Genghis Khan, Attila The Hun, the great conquerors of the world, above all men, all rules.

Genovese licked his lips and dwelt on the future of his life. Like Napoleon, Genovese never thought of himself as small in stature physically. Rather, he was a giant among tall men, a giant in every way.

"What do we have to do first?" Genovese asked, anxious to begin his rise to the top. "Just tell me, Mr. Saietta."

Saietta told him. He spoke to Genovese directly because he felt that this skinny young man was the leader of the two, that whatever he asked him to do would be followed by Luciano. His judgment was correct.

"There are many things to be done," Saietta said. "First, there are a couple of men who must not be allowed to live longer. They must be—"

"Killed?" Genovese put in quickly. "Who are they? Where do I find them?"

Saietta smiled and clapped his

hands together. "Ah, that is good! Good! You will do, my boy." He walked over to where Genovese sat and put his hand on Genovese's shoulder. "Vito, you will go far. You have what it takes." It was a prophetic statement.

"Yes, Mr. Saietta. I want to go far. I want to be somebody. I am ready to do anything, anything at all."

Saietta said, "My boy, there is more to being a somebody than a willingness to do anything. You must always know a little more than the next man, a little more about him than he knows about you. Let me tell you something. I know that you were born on November 21, 1897 in Risigliano, that you came to New York on the *SS Taorimina* on May 23, 1913. I know that you were arrested in—let me see—1917, yes, 1917, for carrying a gun. Your family lives in Queens and you live in a two-room flat on 14th Street. That is so, yes?"

Genovese was impressed. "Yes, Mr. Saietta, that is so."

"I know more about you but it doesn't matter." He waved a non-committal hand. "What does matter is that I know you will do as I say." He smiled a vague smile. "Be sure that you do just that and nothing more." His expression changed. "*Nothing more!*" He clapped his hands together. "Nothing!"

"Of course, Mr. Saietta. Whatever you say."

"Good. Now, about these two

men." He outlined the plan for the murder of the two offending hoods. As he spoke, Luciano moved around nervously in his seat. Murder was not to his liking. He preferred a smoother approach to settling differences.

Saietta guessed as much and directed his words to Genovese. "You will follow my instructions and all will go well. I will send a man with you to drive the getaway car. Be here tomorrow at six o'clock in the evening. The man who will drive the car will be waiting for you. You have a gun?"

"Yes. Several. And sharp knives."

Saietta clapped his hands together and laughed aloud. "Good! You will do. You will do just fine." He turned his attention to Luciano. "I have plans for you too. You are familiar with some men who deal in narcotics, yes?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Saietta."

"Forget them. Never go back to them. I have a large shipment coming in from Italy this week. I will tell you how to dispose of it. You come here Saturday morning about ten o'clock. So?"

"Yes, Mr. Saietta."

"Good. That is all, my boys. Ah, no. One more thing." He dug into a pocket of his trousers and yanked out a roll of bills, peeled off a dozen notes of large denomination. "This is to start you on the road to wealth. A thousand dollars for each of you." He handed the money to Genovese. "Divide it."



LUCKY LUCIANO

THAT WAS GENOVESE'S introduction to wealth and power, as it was Luciano's. The two, while working in separate fields, nonetheless worked together and were friends. In the next five years Vito Genovese became a name to be feared in the underworld. Tough hoods said of him, "He's a kill-crazy S.O.B.!" On several occasions attempts were made to kill him but the killers became the hunted and were gunned down.

Between the time that Genovese joined Ignazio Saietta's family and 1930, he was arrested eleven times for every crime in the book. Luciano during these years had joined the family of Joe The Boss Masseria who controlled all of mid-town Man-

hattan. Genovese spoke to his friend about Joe The Boss.

"Charlie, Masseria is through. He's one of the old *'Mustache Petes'*, an Old World Black Hander. This is America, not Italy. We take Masseria out of the picture and you are the boss. I will be your righthand."

Luciano nodded his head. He had been taken under Masseria's wing several years before and had become Masseria's lieutenant. The fact that Joe The Boss had virtually adopted him as a foster son meant nothing to Luciano, and a lot less to Genovese. Loyalty was a word not an ethic. Luciano said, "We will have to talk to Adonis (Joe Doto), Frank Costello (nee Francesco Castiglia). We will need their word."

"Bah! We need nobody's word!" Genovese thundered. "You are second in command. You give the word; that's all that's necessary!"

"No, Vito. Let me talk to Joe and Frank."

"If you talk to Joe and Frank, then you will have to talk to Willie Moretti in Jersey and Capone in Chicago. Listen to me, Charlie. This is easy. Everybody will think that Salvatore Maranzano and his boys did the killing. Joe The Boss has been trying to get Maranzano for months. Everybody knows that. So—Maranzano finally got Masseria. It's as simple as that. It's the big move, Charlie. It will put us on top."

"What about Maranzano?"

"We'll get to him later. Right

now we have to get Joe The Boss. Once he's out, then you're in. Charlie, listen to me, you will be Mr. Big!"

"Vito," Luciano said, "there is a lot of hate between Masseria and Maranzano. It's the Sicilians against the Neapolitans. Joe The Boss wants all of New York and so does Maranzano. If we take Masseria out of the picture we'll be setting ourselves up as pigeons for Maranzano. After Masseria it will be you and me, and Maranzano will have the town locked up."

In a way, Luciano was right. Tension had existed for some time between the two big bosses. Maranzano was a Sicilian, from the Sicilian town of Castellammare del Golfo. Among the chief hoods who comprised the Castellammare group were Joe Aiello of Chicago, Joseph (Joe Bananas) Bonanno and Joe Profaci of Brooklyn, Stefano Magaddion of Buffalo, and several other powerful Mafioso.

The tie-in was powerful between these gang leaders. To strike at one was to strike at all. Such was Vito Genovese's ego-maniacal lust for power that he was willing to pit himself against a virtual national combine in order to achieve his ambition of a boss—rather, *The Boss*—for it was his intention to usurp Lucky Luciano as top man once the elimination of all opposing hoods has been accomplished.

Joe The Boss Masseria set up the events for his own murder by mov-

ing against a gang leader in his family, a man named Gaetano Reina whose daughter Mildred married Joe Valachi, the Mafia soldier turned stool pigeon. Joe The Boss called in Lucky Luciano and Genovese and explained what he wanted done.

"Reina has double-crossed me," Masseria said. "I want him hit. Now. Tonight. Vito, you take care of it."

"What's he done?" Luciano asked.

"What's he done?" Masseria repeated. "What's he done?" He swore. "What the hell difference does it make what he's done. I said he double-crossed me! That's enough, isn't it?"

Genovese shot Luciano a swift look. Both men knew why Masseria wanted Reina out of the way. Reina controlled the highly profitable ice distribution in New York before electric refrigeration.

Vito Genovese said, "Where does Reina live?"

"3183 Rochambeau Avenue in the Bronx. I am sending him to see somebody at 1522 Sheridan Avenue tonight. When he comes out of the house you hit him!"

"Okay," Genovese said. "Anything else?"

"No. Call me when it is over. That's all."

Genovese armed himself with a sawed-off shotgun and waited outside the house at 1522 Sheridan Avenue. A little after eight o'clock on the evening of February 26, 1930, Gaetano (Tom) Reina came

out of the house. Genovese hailed him.

"Tom, come over here. I wanna talk to you."

Reina recognized Genovese, a member of his family, and walked toward the car. As he approached, Genovese aimed the sawed-off shotgun and fired both barrels into Reina's body, shattering his heart to bits. This was Genovese, cruel, cunning, and cold-blooded.

The day after the murder, Joe The Boss appointed Joe Pinzolo to take over the ice distribution business. Pinzolo was also an Old World Italian, a fat slob with a protruding belly who smelled constantly of garlic. The appointment irked Reina's lieutenants, among them Tommy Lucchese, Dominick (The Gap) Petrilli, and Tom Gagliano. They protested the appointment to Luciano and Genovese.

"Just leave things the way they are," Genovese said. "It will work out. Go along with that pig for the time being."

The trio looked toward Luciano, who stared back blankly for a long moment then said, "Like Vito says, let it ride."

He was thinking that Genovese, even at this early stage before Joe The Boss Masseria was taken out of the picture, was beginning to give orders, usurping his position of chief lieutenant. He shook off the idea that his friend would take over from him. No. They were too close.

True to his word, Genovese set

up the murder of Joe Pinzolo. He ordered Bobby Doyle to hit Pinzolo. Sometime around nine o'clock on the evening of September 9, 1930, a little more than six months after the murder of Gaetano Reina, Doyle caught up with Pinzolo in Suite 1007 in the Brokaw Building at 1487 Broadway in New York City and shot him dead.

The office was leased to Tommy Lucchese under the name of the California Dry Fruit Importers.

Lucchese was promptly indicted for the murder. The charges were eventually dropped and Lucchese went free. As a matter of fact, he had nothing at all to do with either the planning of the killing or carrying it out.

The infamous Castellammare war, as it came to be known, was still going on, with Joe The Boss Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano swearing to wipe each other out. The killings on both sides were numerous. Luciano sought to make peace between the two.

"Don't be a fool, Charlie!" Genovese said. "We don't want peace. This is the best thing that could happen. Let it alone."

"Why, Vito? It's bringing heat on the town. We're being hurt all over. Nobody can make a move any place without the fuzz on their tail."

"It'll blow over. This is like a lion and a tiger fighting each other. Both are sure to get killed and then we move in and take over."

An ugly word came to Luciano's

mind. *Jackals*. It wasn't the way he wanted it. He said, "I got the word from Maranzano. He said there would never be peace until Masseria was dead."

"Good. Now's the time to arrange it. With Masseria out of the picture we have peace."

"What about Maranzano?"

Genovese grinned. "With Maranzano out of the picture we have the town." He jabbed a forefinger into Luciano's chest. "You and me, Charlie. We lock up the town."

Luciano bought it. He arranged to have dinner with Masseria at Scarpato's Restaurant, located at 2715 West 15th Street in Coney Island. After a heavy repast, Luciano suggested a game of cards. The two men played and talked until the restaurant emptied of other diners. At this point, Luciano excused himself and said he had to go to the washroom. While he was absent two men walked in and moved directly to where Joe The Boss Masseria sat. He looked up and saw two guns pointed at him and started to yell.

"No, no!" he yelled in Italian. "Not me! *Madre Mia*. Not me! Salvatore!" he yelled. It was Luciano's given Italian name. But Luciano didn't answer. The manager and workers in the restaurant ducked behind counters and chairs as the gunmen opened fire.

Masseria's murder became Case No. 133 in the files of the 60th

Squad, New York Police Department, which noted:

"On April 15, 1931, sometime around 3:30 P.M., Giuseppe Masseria, also known as Joe The Boss, last known residence, 65 Second Avenue, New York City, was shot and killed by persons unknown."

Information at that time was to the effect that the gunmen were Frank Livorsi and Joseph Stracci, alias Joe Stretch. Other "inside" information declared that the actual killers were Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and Joe Adonis. Both stories could be wrong. At any rate, no one was ever charged for the crime because none of the staff in the restaurant were able to identify the killers.

WITH JOE THE BOSS out of the way, Luciano took over and made Genovese his chief lieutenant.

In Luciano's sumptuous suite in a midtown hotel, Genovese leaned back in a large armchair, a drink in his hand, and grinned at his friend. "Like I said, Charlie, we're on top. We've got peace with Maranzano and everything is jake, right down the line."

"I don't trust Maranzano," Luciano said darkly.

"Neither do I," Genovese answered. "He's next."

"There'll be hell to pay."

Genovese swung a foot idly as he sipped from his glass. "There always is," he offered. "And it always blows over. We've got the boys, Charlie.

Nobody in his right mind wants to buck us."

At this stage of their relationship Genovese already indicated the goal to which he was driving, the complete takeover of the Mafia—or as it was to become known—the Cosa Nostra.

Luciano was far from being dull or stupid but it was inconceivable to him that Genovese would want to replace him as boss of the New York rackets. It was more inconceivable to him, that Genovese would be shooting for the big job, the *Capo dei Capi*. To achieve that, Genovese would have to eliminate at least a score of the top gang leaders in the country. The caper was too big, involved too many men, not only the gang leaders but their lieutenants, and these would kill or send men to kill both him and Genovese.

In this, Luciano underestimated Genovese's cunning.

Genovese knew for a certainty that Maranzano's peace making was at best a flimsy thing, made of tissue paper and hot air. By devious ways Genovese learned that Maranzano had hired Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll and two of Coll's henchmen to do away with him and Luciano. He kept the information from Luciano until he had made arrangements for the murder of Maranzano. He hired Bugsy Siegel and Sam "Red" Levine to eliminate Maranzano.

Maranzano meanwhile called Luciano and asked him to meet with

him—a setup for the murder, Lucky Luciano believed.

“You come to my office, Charlie,” Maranzano said. “You and Vito. I have a big plan for you both.”

Lucky Luciano told Vito Genovese of the call. “What do you make of it? We have to go alone. Nobody else with us. And no guns. I don’t like it.”

Salvatore Maranzano, contrary to popular belief, was a man of superior intellect and organizational ability. He was born in the village of Castellammare and emigrated to America shortly after the First World War, settled in New York and immediately took up his criminal career, first as a bootlegger and hijacker of liquor trucks and warehouses, and branching out into everything that brought in a hot buck.

He had studied for the priesthood, spoke a half-dozen languages fluently and was a student of Julius Caesar, from whom he borrowed much of his knowledge for organization.

Shortly after the death of Joe The Boss, Maranzano set up the guidelines for what is now the National Combine of Criminal Organization. He conferred with Johnny Torrio, once boss of Chicago, Frank Costello, and other top men who had advanced to leadership by virtue of their brains rather than with the gun.

He had initially named Lucky Luciano, Joseph Profaci, Tommy Gagliano, Vincent Mangano, and Joe

Bonnano as the five bosses in New York City. Under-bosses were Vito Genovese, Albert Anastasia, and Tommy Lucchese, alias *Tommy Three-Finger Brown*.

Maranzano had as a legitimate front, a real estate company with offices in the Grand Central Building, located at Park Avenue and 46th Street. It was here that he wanted to see Luciano and Genovese.

That was all that Genovese wanted to know. On September 11, 1931, some six months after the murder of Joe The Boss, Bugsy Siegel and Red Levine walked into Maranzano’s office, shot him and cut his throat. Assuring themselves that he was dead, the two killers walked calmly out of the office and ran into Vincent Coll and two of his henchmen, guns in hand. They had come to kill Luciano and Genovese and were surprised to find Siegel and Red Levine. It was a tense moment, for there was no love lost between Coll and Siegel. Levine thought fast.

“Beat it, Coll,” Levine half-whispered, “there’s going to be a raid. The cops are on their way right now.”

Before Coll could think of an answer Levine and Siegel swept past him, and Coll followed them out into the street, the two groups going in opposite directions.

In the next twenty-four hours some dozen of Maranzano’s key men were killed in every area of New



ALBERT ANASTASIA

York, and Lucky Luciano took over as boss of New York City. What he didn't know was that he had an alter ego, a death-dealing shadow named Vito Genovese.

Genovese, through sly and devious innuendos, persuaded Lucky to issue orders to their lieutenants through him.

"You are the boss, Charlie. You sit on the throne and tell me what you want done and I'll see to it that it's done. Okay, Charlie?"

"Sure, Vito. That's a good idea. But make sure that nothing bounces back to you. You tell one man, and pick the right guy when you do. Make sure he picks the right men for whatever job is to be done."

"I did all right so far. Yes, Charlie?"

"Yes, you have. But don't get overconfident. That's when trouble comes."

"Leave it to me," Genovese answered tersely. "I know which way is up." There was a double-entendre there but Luciano missed it. He still believed that Genovese would be satisfied with his position as under-boss. He completely forgot their first meeting with Ignazio Saitta when Genovese said, "I will do whatever you say, *anything*, if you will make me rich and powerful."

Genovese moved like a man who was being pushed by the devil. He issued orders and commands like a general of the army and demanded complete obedience. He received it because hoods now knew that to disobey Genovese meant sure death, even for the slightest infraction. Through it all there was one thing in his mind, the motivating force for all his cruelty, indiscriminate murders, the elimination of all opposition which might serve as a threat to his coveted position as boss of the nation's criminal empire.

Genovese took time to turn to romance. He loved, or said he did, his distant cousin, Anna Petillo Vernotico, a dark-haired, dark-eyed beauty who was married to Gerardo Vernotico. Genovese wooed her with lavish gifts, but being Italian and a Catholic she reminded him that she was very much married and that they had best not see each other.

Genovese took care of that little obstacle in short order.

Genovese lured Gerardo Vernotico to the roof of a tenement a few doors from his Genovese Trading Company located at 184 Thompson Street in Greenwich Village and pointed a gun at his heart.

Gerardo pleaded for his life.

"Don't kill me, Vito. I beg you, please, have mercy, don't kill me. I know you love Anna and want her for your wife. You can have her. I will give her a divorce."

"No, Gerardo, it is not good enough. She would be denied all the church rights, ex-communicated. You have to die. It is the only way. You wish to say a prayer? Say it"

"Please, Vito, don't do it!" Gerardo pleaded passionately. "I will go away. You will never see me again. It will be desertion and Anna can marry you and still be right with the church."

Genovese sneered. "You are right, Gerardo. You will go away and I will never see you again because you will go far away to hell! Thirty seconds, Gerardo! Pray!"

Gerardo's lips moved in a trembling motion and then he crossed himself. As his hands dropped, Genovese shot him through the heart and left him there.

Less than two weeks later the saddened widow married Genovese in a quiet City Hall ceremony that was performed by a judge friendly to Genovese.

She was then only twenty two

years old, a beauty who shook the emotions and aroused the passions of every man who looked at her, but that was all they could do—look. She was as much off-limits as would be the defilement of a holy shrine.

Having succeeded in winning her, Genovese rested on his victory and laurels. He had an eye for beauties on the loose and selected them for his pleasures as one might select socks in a haberdashery. Some of these he put up in expensive hotel rooms and kept them for weeks. Others he finished with after but a single evening of fun. It was inevitable that these outings would come to the attention of Anna.

A woman of deep pride, she resented strongly her husband's infidelities and spoke to him about them. He denied them. She knew better, however. Genovese's power of persuasion was strong. He assured her that he loved her only, which is why he married her. It is possible that Anna began to doubt her suspicions for she agreed to serve him in many ways.

"You are a good wife, Anna, and after the presidential election we will go on a honeymoon to Italy. I will show you the time of your life, everything you wish."

Anna Genovese was delighted.

The 1932 Democratic convention, which was held in Chicago, demonstrated the power the criminal element controls politically on a national scale. The split of Tammany

Hall provided the means and impetus for the mob to move into the political picture, at this time to nominate Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President of the United States.

Al Smith, Governor of the State of New York, was the native son and the Smith faction was led by Albert C. Marinelli, a ward healer from Mulberry Street who had gained his position as district leader through the efforts of Genovese and Luciano. That effort involved visiting the incumbant district leader and advising him gently that if he didn't resign the immediate home of his wife and kids would be at the bottom of the East River.

Genovese and Luciano, on the advice of Jimmy Hines, a crooked Tammany Hall leader, backed Roosevelt. However, the mob plays only sure things. In this case they played both Smith and Roosevelt on the nose, at even money odds.

The mob arranged a cozy setup at the Drake Hotel on Chicago's North Side which skirted the famed Gold Coast and fronted Lake Michigan. Sharing suites were Jimmy Hines and Frank Costello; Lucky Luciano and Al Marinelli; and Vito Genovese and a Roosevelt assistant campaign manager.

It didn't matter who won. The mob was in. Roosevelt won and Jimmy Hines didn't forget the tremendous cash contributions which had been made by Luciano, Genovese, and Costello toward that victory. Neither did he forget that the

mob held sway at election booths all over the country to assure that victory.

In the end it was to go for naught because of the introduction of a determined special district attorney named Thomas E. Dewey, who was to become the Governor of the State of New York.

True to his word, Genovese took Anna on a belated honeymoon to Italy. He took with him a bag full of money and ensconced himself and his bride of a year in a luxury suite aboard a luxury liner.

In Rome, Genovese met, wined and dined Achille Pisani, secretary of Benito Mussolini's corrupt Fascist Party. He entertained other members of the party lavishly and threw money around as if it were going out of style. He proved his point—cooperate with Genovese, the boss of America's crime cartel, and wealth would be your reward. He returned to New York in August of that year confident that he had made numerous and valuable friends in Italy.

The primary purpose of Vito's visit to Italy was not to enjoy a honeymoon but to set up connections for dope, heroin, to be delivered to New York by various couriers. His introduction to some of the top men in Mussolini's Fascist party gave him those connections. It also gave him the fullest of assurances that he was superior to anyone in the Cosa Nostra, that he was Cosa Nostra. The Mafia rules did not apply to him.

Rather, his rules applied to the Mafia.

An example of this came about in the fall of 1934, when Ferdinand "The Shadow" Boccia, a lowly soldier in one of the Cosa Nostra families, told Genovese that a businessman who gambled at one of the many joints Genovese ran in Brooklyn and Queens could be set up for a kill. He asked Vito if he would give the okay to take the mark.

"Sure, go ahead and take him," Don Vitone, *The Great One*, replied. Don Vitone. Genovese gloried in that title. It served his ego.

Two weeks later, *The Shadow* brought \$125,000 to Genovese and laid the bills out on the table.

"It was easy," Boccia said in a gloating tone. "Like taking candy from a baby. Some candy, eh, Don Vitone?"

"Sure, sure, nice job, Ferdinand. Look, I'm busy now and can't count this money. How much is here? \$125,000? Good. I will count it later and give you your cut. See me next week."

NEXT WEEK CAME, and the week after that, and the week after that and still Genovese did not send Boccia his cut of one-third. Furthermore, he had no intention of giving Boccia a dime. What he did intend to do was to kill him. A bum like Boccia wouldn't know what to do with upwards of \$40,000.

However, there had to be a reason for killing him, so Genovese eased

the word that Boccia and Willie Gallo had heisted Anthony Strollo, alias Tony Bender, of a large sum of money. Strollo was high up in the Cosa Nostra and holding him up was a particularly harsh violation of the code. Boccia and Gallo had to be reprimanded.

Boccia was killed but Gallo, who was shot three times in the head by Ernie "The Hawk" Rupolo refused to die. He learned of the way he had been set up, first ordered to execute Boccia as an aide to Rupolo and then set up to be killed himself.

He recovered and told police all he knew of the Boccia murder. Rupolo, Mike Miranda, Vito Genovese, and three men who had actually carried out the murder of Boccia were arrested. At the trial, Gallo had a complete loss of memory and couldn't remember a thing. Everyone but The Hawk was released. Rupolo got nine to twenty years for his part in the Boccia murder. This again was Vito Genovese, a man who could be trusted on a dark night in a dark alley as a true friend.

Things broke right for Genovese, strangely enough considering his character, when in 1936 Thomas E. Dewey went after Luciano and a score of his pimps for running a string of brothels.

Vito was ecstatic. He was all in favor of a clean town devoid of whores who were ruining the morals of the young and old. No matter who was behind the vicious racket the culprits had to be punished, even

if that punishment reached out to his good friend Charlie Lucky. That was Vito Genovese's feeling about the indictment.

To prove that he was a friend in need, Genovese sought out a prominent Fifth Avenue attorney named Joshua Crane, a man with an impeccable reputation for integrity. Counselor Crane did not take criminal cases. He told Genovese that when Vito walked into his offices followed by three tough-looking henchmen.

"Yes, I know, Counselor," Genovese said, "but I was told you were acquainted with Mr. Dewey and I thought that perhaps you would be willing to speak to him about my friend, Charlie Luciano."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Genovese," Crane replied, "but I don't know Mr. Dewey, never met him. You've been misinformed."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I want to help my friend in any way I can and I was hoping you might be in a position to offer that help. Well, we'll try another source, eh, boys? How much do I owe you, Counselor? I took up some of your time."

"Nothing, nothing at all, Mr. Genovese. I'm sorry I can't be of help."

When Genovese and the three hoods left, Josh Crane went into the outer office and asked his secretary, "Who the hell let that guy in?"

His secretary, still shaken by the sight of the three hoods who fol-



JOE MASSERIA

lowed Genovese, said, "That's what the hell I'd like to know"

Crane laughed, shook his head, and walked back into his office wondering why Genovese sought him out.

Genovese had merely made a gesture. He wanted it on the record, with the three witnesses he had brought along, that he had made every effort to help his pal.

Luciano was convicted and drew the stiffest sentence ever meted out for the offense, thirty to fifty years. Genovese now began to take over as boss of New York and laid plans to take over the nation's underworld. He was thwarted by Dewey who, after Lucky had been imprisoned for a year, began to build a case against Genovese. Prison life was

not to Vito's liking, in any respect, and he made plans to skip the country.

He held meetings with Frank Costello, Mike Miranda, and his wife, and worked out arrangements for the trio to handle the rackets he controlled. They were the Italian lottery, which Anna was to control, and which she stated under oath later on brought in \$2,000,000 a year, narcotics, gambling, and the score of legitimate businesses which he owned.

In the fall of that year, 1937, Genovese left Anna and his two small children, Nancy and Philip, and sailed to Italy, taking a suitcase full of American dollars with him.

The Italian lottery and several clubs which Genovese owned in Greenwich Village provided Anna with an income that permitted her to live in luxury. She leased an apartment at 29 Washington Square West, directly above that occupied by Eleanor Roosevelt, no less, at the time the wife of the President of the United States.

Genovese was welcomed back by Achille Pisani, who won him an audience with Mussolini. The two became friends and Genovese played host to Mussolini, the dictator's son-in-law, Count Ciano, and other Fascist big-wigs, at parties and banquets in exclusive Rome hotels. Count Ciano in turn took Genovese on tours of the best bistros, entertained him with some of the most beautiful call girls in Italy, and the

two made frequent trips to the Riviera. They took a bevy of play-girls with them.

It was inevitable that photographers would shoot pictures of the two men, the son-in-law of Mussolini, and a notorious New York gangster, surrounded by half a dozen delicious damsels. The pictures were widely circulated in American newspapers and when Anna saw them she burned. Yet, despite this, she remained the faithful wife. She made many trips to Rome carrying huge sums which she delivered to her husband.

During the time he remained in Italy, from 1937 until after the end of World War II, Genovese was close to Benito Mussolini, who went so far as to bestow a civilian medal of honor upon him for service to the government.

From all reports, the only service Genovese rendered the Italian government was to entertain Mussolini, his son-in-law, Count Ciano, and to help Mussolini steal millions of dollars not only from the government itself but from the American Army and the Allied Military Government.

Too, the word is that Genovese arranged to have Carlo Tresca murdered in New York as Tresca walked on Fifth Avenue and 15th Street.

Carlo Tresca was an avowed enemy of fascism and communism and wrote scathing editorials about it in his newspapers *Il Martello*, *The Hammer*, which did much to expose Mussolini with the large Italian col-

onies in the United States. Mussolini wanted him silenced.

Genovese returned to the United States in 1945, in custody. He was wanted for a murder in Brooklyn, but all the witnesses had disappeared or were murdered and he was turned loose to pick up where he had left off to gain his objective, *capo dei capi*, boss of all bosses.

The turbulence Genovese always generated by his operations and maneuvers immediately became evident as he made phone calls and sent messages to the various bosses of families in the Cosa Nostra. At this time, too, Joe Valachi came into the picture in a rather pronounced way.

Valachi had been closely connected with the Mafia for more than thirty years. He was a confirmed criminal and racketeer whose crimes ranged from burglary to murder. In between there was a dozen noxious enterprises—dope, shylocking, the numbers racket, protection racket, heists, and what-have-you.

He was arrested nineteen times, twelve of those times for investigation for violation of the narcotics law. An ugly man, about average height, stocky, with a large nose and thick lips, he was about as unsavory a character as you could meet. He was an enemy of society, an outcast, and at the end he was an outcast in the underworld, a man who had broken the codes on both sides of the line.

Genovese needed someone like

Valachi to handle the highly profitable narcotics racket in which he was dealing as a result of the connections he had made in Italy. Thus began an association that was to lead to Genovese's downfall, mainly because Genovese was the stingiest big-time underworld operator of all time, besting even Dutch Schultz, who was known for the zippers on his pockets which only went up and seldom down.

Genovese used Valachi for other things besides narcotics but he seldom gave him his proper cut or piece of the action. Valachi burned but didn't complain. He knew better.

IN HIS BID for the very top, Genovese knew he had to eliminate men like Frank Costello and Albert Anastasia. Costello was a close friend of Meyer Lansky and Frank Erickson, two of the most important men in the gambling operations of the Syndicate. As such, Costello commanded a tremendous amount of power in Mafia muscle. Lansky was a partner with Bugsy Siegel in the Bug and Meyer mob and knew his way around in all the complex labyrinths of the underworld. He would protect Costello.

Albert Anastasia bossed the docks and could call on a thousand men to oppose Genovese if he so chose. There was no love lost between Genovese and Anastasia, for many reasons, chief among them being the double-cross of Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, who died in the electric

chair at Sing Sing. Buchalter and Anastasia had been close friends.

Genovese was headstrong and, in some ways, stupid. He decided to have Costello killed despite the repercussions which he knew would come from Meyer Lansky.

Genovese ordered Vincent "Chin" Gigante to kill Costello. On the night of May 1, 1957, Gigante lay in wait for Costello in the lobby of the Central Park West apartment house where Costello lived. As the Prime Minister of the Underworld walked into the lobby, Gigante, a little nervous and a little scared at the moment as he realized the monumental act he was about to carry out and potential repercussions for him, fired one quick shot at Costello and fled in panic. The slug creased Costello's scalp. No more.

The attempt on Costello's life brought him a great deal of trouble with the law because he refused to identify Gigante as his assailant who was acquitted of the attempted murder charge. Costello drew a jail term for contempt.

While he was sitting out his sentence, Costello received word that Genovese had taken from him everything he controlled in New York. Anastasia immediately called Genovese and said he wanted to talk to him. They met in Genovese's apartment.

Anastasia came right to the point.

"You made a mistake, Vito," Anastasia said firmly. "You're step-

ping on a lot of toes and a lot of people don't like it."

"You included?" Genovese asked although he knew the answer.

"Me first!" Anastasia retorted. "Frank's a good friend of mine and I don't like what you did, understand?"

"Albert," Genovese said coldly, "you mind your own business, see, or you're gonna get it next, and this time it won't be from a scared rabbit who's gonna miss!"

Anastasia, chief executioner for Murder, Inc., glared hotly at Genovese. Maybe Genovese forgot that he, Albert Anastasia, had hit two score of men, none of whom he missed or lived to tell the story. Maybe Genovese thought he was talking to a lowly punk. Anastasia set him straight in no uncertain terms.

"Listen to me, Vito, and listen good. You've been acting wild ever since you got back from Italy. I know you let Charlie Lucky down, that you didn't raise a finger to help him when all those whores and pimps were testifying against him. I know all about your little trip to see a lawyer named Josh Crane. I know that Crane is a corporation lawyer and couldn't find his way into a criminal court if his life depended on it. That was your big gesture, your big bluff. You tell me to mind my own business or I'll be next, huh? Take it from me, Vito. Straighten up and fly right or *you're*

going to be the next one to get hit, Understand?"

"Get the hell outta here!" Genovese yelled. "Get out, you bum! Get out or I'll have you hit here!"

Anastasia underestimated Genovese's cunning, his big lies to justify the extermination of a powerful member of the Mafia. He waited for five months and then called Carlo Gambino, Anastasia's chief lieutenant, and made him a proposition.

"Carlo," Genovese said, "I have the word that Albert has been selling phony memberships to people for admittance into a *family* for amounts from \$15,000 to \$25,000. He has broken the code. He must be hit."

Carlo Gambino, a handsome, suave, movie-type gangster who had more brains in his ears than Genovese had in his head, knew that Genovese was lying and he was aghast at the suggestion made to him. Genovese noted the reluctant expression on Gambino's face.

"Carlo," Genovese said, "Anastasia is hit and you become boss of his family. You and Joe Biondo take care of this and Joe can be your captain. You got nothing to worry about because I've already fixed it with everybody so there will be no trouble for you or Joe." He placed a hand on Gambino's shoulder in a gesture of great friendliness. "You should've been boss long ago. Now is the time."

Whether Gambino followed through or not is, truthfully, not



known. However, on October 25, 1957, two men walked into the barber shop of the Park Sheraton Hotel where Anastasia had gone for a shave and pumped half a dozen slugs into his body and head.

In the big meeting that followed in the small upstate New York town of Apalachin when some fifty *mafioso* were arrested, Vito Genovese declared that he was now the *capo dei capi*.

After much discussion, pro and con, Genovese won approval and was given a vote of confidence by the assemblage. The vote that made him king of the underworld went to Genovese's head. He turned more cruel, vicious, demanded more and more for his share of every criminal enterprise carried out by the families in the Cosa Nostra combine, and not only in the New York area but across the width of the nation.

He didn't know it but two things were working against him, and rapidly. One, he had grown increasingly unpopular with virtually all the top men in the Combination, and two, federal narcotics agents were building a case against him and Joe Valachi, whom they knew was the chief agent in the distribution of vast amounts of narcotics flowing into the country from Italy via Algiers and Casablanca through Charlie Luciano.

Another incident which led to his ultimate downfall was Anna's suit for divorce in 1952. She testified as to her husband's activities, especially the Italian lottery which she had supervised.

"My husband took in between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a week from the Italian lottery," Anna Genovese declared.

She also testified as to other incomes from huge gambling interests, labor union kickbacks, night-clubs, loan-shark activities, and a dozen other sundry enterprises. She detailed the location of safe deposit boxes in which Vito had stored huge amounts of cash.

"I want a divorce from my husband," she stated, "because my life with him is endangering my health and in the past ten years I have not had a single moment of peace. It has been extremely wretched and bitter."

Genovese was completely distraught over Anna's suit for divorce, as he was embarrassed by her testimony which divulged his underworld activities. Everyone was certain that Genovese would have her killed. In his way, he loved her, and loving her he never entertained the thought of having her murdered. Instead, in order to assuage his feelings, he sought out a fall-guy and his eyes fell on Steve Franse.

Franse was a small man physically, never was a member of the syndicate, but had been a partner with Genovese in several of his night-clubs, and with Anna in several others which she personally owned in Greenwich Village, and which she had declared strongly, "are not part of the Syndicate, but mine and mine alone!"

Genovese blamed Franse for Anna's suit for divorce. "The bum should have kept a closer watch on her. He should've talked her out of any idea to sue me for divorce. He's

a dirty little rat. I want him hit."

Joe Valachi related that two muscle men named Pat Pagano and Fiore Siano brought Steve Franse to his Lido restaurant on the night of June 18, 1953 on the pretext of showing him the place.

They wound up in the kitchen, where husky Pat Pagano grabbed Franse from behind in an armlock. Fiore then walloped him in the belly and mouth and knocked him cold. As he lay on his face on the kitchen floor, Siano and Pagano wrapped a chain around his neck and strangled him.

Steve Franse's body was discovered in his car the next morning about ten o'clock, in front of 164 East 37th Street in Manhattan. His face and body were covered with abrasions and contusions, and one rib on the left side of his body was fractured. This was Vito Genovese's answer to Anna's divorce, and she undoubtedly knew it.

There were other killings ordered by Genovese, all as senseless as the Franse murder, among them Dominick "The Gap" Petrilli, a close friend of Valachi's, Frank "Don Cheech" Scalice, Joe Scalice, brother of Frank, and others.

The FBI was working strongly on the case against Genovese and much to his surprise, the *capo dei capi* was charged with violation of the narcotics law, tried, convicted, and sentenced to 15 years in the Atlanta Penitentiary. The conviction and sentence came about a year after the

infamous meeting at Apalachin which made newspaper headlines all over America, and rocked the underworld.

In 1960, Joe Valachi and Ralph Wagner were convicted on the same charges and sentenced to Atlanta. During the time he was under arrest, Valachi was questioned relentlessly by FBI agents. While he did reveal a great deal about the narcotics traffic he did not involve any member of the Cosa Nostra families.

When Valachi reached Atlanta on June 16, 1960 as Number 82811 he was assigned to the mess hall as a waiter. Wagner was assigned to Genovese's cell and told him what he knew of Valachi's talks with the FBI agents. It was the conversations with Wagner that convinced Genovese he must have Valachi killed.

Wagner really didn't mean to imply that Valachi was a stool pigeon, only that he had talked with FBI agents and revealed a "little about the narcotics traffic." When Genovese intimated that Valachi would have to be killed, Wagner sought out Valachi and warned him.

The man Genovese selected to do away with Valachi was Joseph DiPalmero, a five feet five inch, one hundred and twenty pound Cosa Nostra henchman.

Even in prison, Genovese had to prove to one and all that he was still the *capo dei capi*, that he could order a killing from behind prison walls within the prison or outside it. This was the ego of the man.

Too much is already known of the incidents which led Valachi to kill the wrong man, a look-alike for DiPalmero named John Joseph Saupp, suffice it to say that the killing of Saupp threw Valachi into a murder charge. Incensed over Genovese's perfidy, over all the miserable, rotten, double-dealing he had suffered at his hands, Valachi decided to talk in order to escape the murder rap.

When Valachi started to talk he told of the "kiss of death" bestowed upon him by Genovese, his mistaking Saupp for DiPalmero, and then opened up wide on the Mafia, naming it for the first time in the Mafia's black history as *The Cosa Nostra*.

If Valachi earned himself the title of the most famous stool pigeon in the world, then Vito Genovese certainly should be credited with creating him.

When Vito Genovese died on St.

Valentine's Day of 1969, his body was brought back to Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. Father Lease, assisted by another priest and three altar boys, delivered a brief homily before the undraped casket that was flanked by six votive candles.

He said: "Happy are the dead who died in the love of the Lord. If we have lived the good life then we are going into another life of everlasting happiness."

It is difficult to say whether Father Lease meant this as a eulogy or a religious philosophy.

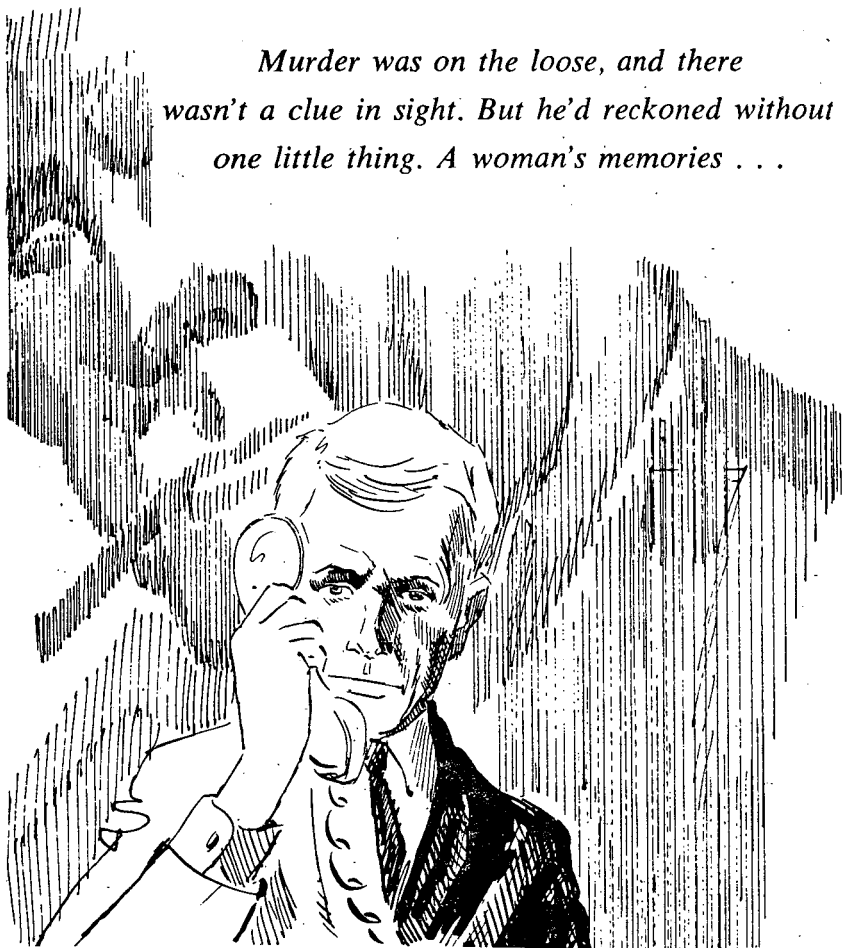
Vito Genovese was laid to rest in St. John's Cemetery, Middle Village, Queens, a short distance from where his pal, Charlie "Lucky" Luciano, was buried. This is either irony or justice. In the last analysis of the man, not a single mob man, from Cosa Nostra or otherwise, attended the funeral. That in itself speaks best of the man who strove to be the Boss of Bosses.



Coming Soon:

Another TRUE CRIME STORY masterpiece
by DAVID MAZROFF

Murder was on the loose, and there wasn't a clue in sight. But he'd reckoned without one little thing. A woman's memories . . .



Your Father's Mustache

by IRWIN ROSS

I NEVER DID want my mother to make herself useful, as she put it, around my office, but there wasn't much that I could do about it. Over the years, I had not won

too many discussions with her. My most notable victory was that I had never raised a mustache and she thought I should have one just because my dad wore one.

He had been the sheriff of River City before me and the office had been handed down as kind of a father-to-son gesture by the voters. Mother seemed to think that this included her.

There was hardly enough to keep me busy, since River City was a small and quiet town where the greatest crime was to be caught with a parking ticket. I very seldom even issued one because I was really a "softie" and besides, it's not easy to ask a friend to part with the three dollars that went to pay for the ticket.

I had just done that very thing to a car that had been parked too close to a fire hydrant. I might have just overlooked it if the owner of the car had not had the nerve to do it right in front of my office. This was kind of rubbing my nose in the sand and I was happy to oblige the stranger who had possibly thought he did not have to take small town ordinances seriously.

Mother was busy dusting the office—a chore which she had provided for herself as an excuse for being around the place—when I returned. She had the hourly news on the radio and was listening as she worked.

There was the usual rash of small town incidents which did not elicit any more than a raised eyebrow from her. Then came the information, a re-broadcast of a news item which had been on the air earlier

in the morning, that a bank in Florida had been held up and the bandit was still at large.

It was of little consequence to me. I had thought that of the earlier broadcast and I felt that way about it now. Mother stopped her dusting to turn up the sound so she would not miss anything.

There was nothing to miss. The bandit, described as a blonde male, well-dressed and wearing a mustache, had walked into the bank. He handed a cashier a note demanding that she put all her bills into a bag which he had provided or he would kill her.

He then walked out of the bank, got into a car which had the motor running, and headed south.

"Better keep a good eye open, Walter," mother said.

"He's headed in the other direction," I told her.

"Sounds that way but—" She did not finish her sentence.

We might have continued the conversation, but the stranger who had just received the ticket from me was coming into the office.

"You give me this, Sheriff?" he asked.

"I did, sir," I said. "Just doing my duty."

"Right," he agreed affably and handed me the ticket and three dollars.

I took it without taking a good look at him. I did notice that he had dark hair, that he wore a hunting coat with his license on the back.

He waited as I issued a receipt and then he left the office.

Mother was standing in a corner from where she could watch the proceedings. This was not unusual for my little helper. She had always tried to be inconspicuous but her interest in law enforcement was actually quite keen.

The man had just closed the door when she was at the window and looking at the stranger's car. I looked up long enough to see that he was driving away. Then she hurried to my side.

"That's your man, Walter," she snapped at me. "Mother knows."

"I know," I said. "I got his fine right here."

"That's not what I mean, Walter," she said a little louder.

"What do you mean?"

"That's the man who held up the bank in Florida," she said.

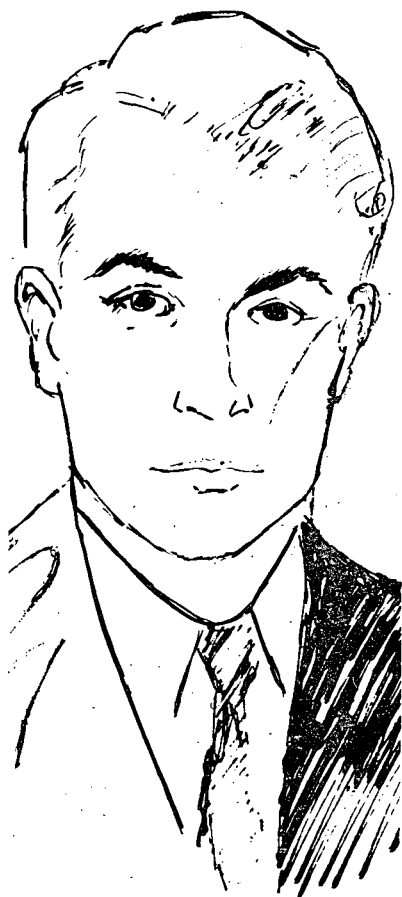
"Aw, come on," I pushed her idea away. "Every time a stranger drives through River City he will be a suspect in your mind."

I was going to end the argument by leaving her and the office and taking a walk to see the boys at the barber shop. It wasn't that simple. She stood right in front of the door and barred it with her mop. She was really serious about her deductions.

"Walter," she told me in a stern voice, "call the state police."

"I'd be the laughing stock of the state," I tried to convince her.

"That is the man who robbed the



bank in Florida," she insisted. "He's driving a red car with white sidewall tires and —"

"The bandit in Florida had a green car," I said.

"He could have switched cars and he did, Walter," she pressed me. "And the license number is G00-008."

I had never seen her this serious

"Look, Mother," I tried again. "The news report stated that the man was going in the other direction. He was driving a green car with Florida plates and this man has a red car—"

"He changed cars, Walter," she barked at me. "Call Joe Hagan at the state police barracks and you'll see that I'm right."

This was a good idea and it would satisfy her. I could call Joe, a personal friend, and explain the situation. Joe would understand and have a small smile at my expense. I called, I told. He assured me he would look into the matter at once.

In less than an hour he called back. He congratulated me. The man had been caught with the bank's money right in the car. Mother heard the conversation. She

smiled when I told Joe that she deserved the credit. I shrugged my shoulder, there was not much else I could do at this point.

"How did you know?" I asked.

"He didn't do a very good job of dyeing his hair, Walter," she said. "Besides, he had been in the sun as he was tanned. All except the spot where his mustache had been. That spot was white. So I knew that he had shaved off the mustache. And Walter," she grinned, "I wish that you'd raise one. You would look at lot like your father if you did it."

So far I have not made up my mind about it. I'd like to look like dad, I'd like to please mother. But every time I looked in the mirror I'd be reminded of the bank bandit from Florida.



Complete in the Next Issue

A WILD YOUNG CORPSE

An Exciting New MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

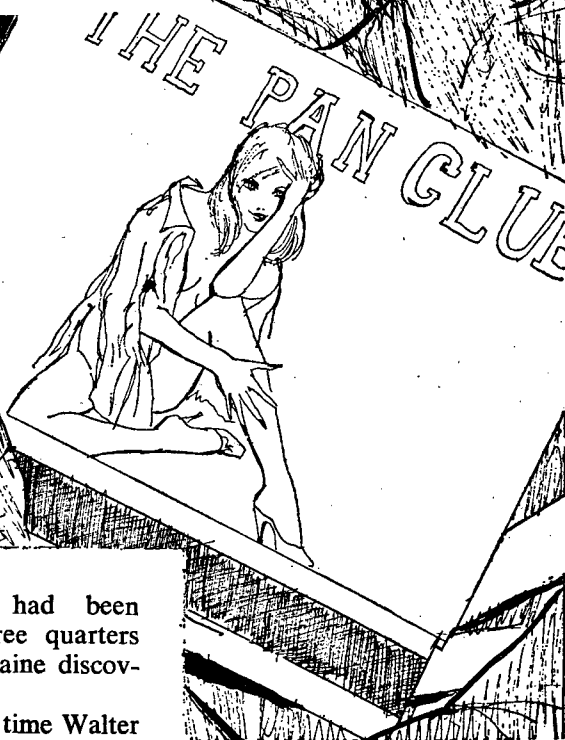
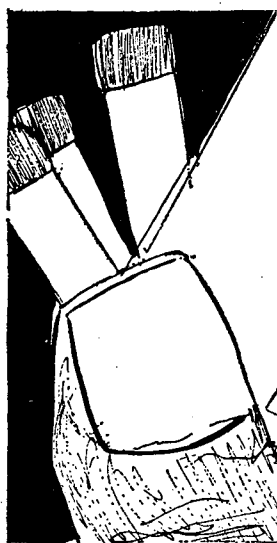
by BRETT HALLIDAY

They told Mike Shayne to lay off the Bethany Mark murder or it would be his last job. But the redhead had promised the girl's father he would crack the case of the slain party girl. A case so lurid the cops wouldn't touch it.

"Sleep well," he
said. "It—it is
forever, my dear."

THE MATCHES

by
JOHN JAKES



WALTER JONSON had been
home about three quarters
of an hour when Lorraine discov-
ered the matches.

For nearly half that time Walter

had been in his own bedroom, wondering how long it would take her to notice. Then, through the silent upstairs of the big house, her cry rang out suddenly:

"Walter?"

Now, he thought with relief.

"Walter! Come in here, please. You left something."

Nasty female, he thought, hearing the sarcasm of her last three words, the relished delight at having caught him. In a way he rather dreaded the scene to come.

Still, why not get it over with? Why not, at last, admit he couldn't go on? And do it in a positive, pleasing, absolutely final way?

Why not indeed, since he'd planned it that way anyhow?

Yet for a moment he was reluctant to leave his pleasant, cozy bedroom furnished in plaids and bright masculine tones.

He had been standing by the dormer, staring out over the lonely, frozen countryside. In here it was cheerful. The furnace hummed far away, generating heat. Outside it was dark February. The attendant who'd fetched Walter's car earlier at the motel parking garage had said the temperature was to go to at least fifteen below that night.

Almost a shame, to have to go out again.

Walter stayed by the window a moment longer. Perhaps three miles off, the mercury lights on the Pike cast a faint bluish halation

into the night sky. And that smudge in the east was Hometown.

Well, it was time.

As he passed the closet door he paused to stare into the long mirror. He was still fairly good looking. He had no paunch. The touches of gray at his temples were like magnets for women, he'd found.

"Walter? Did you hear me? Please come in here at once!"

He pulled his dressing gown from one of the closet hooks. He picked up his suit jacket when it slipped off the doorknob and replaced it. He slipped into the plaid wool robe, adjusting it over his clothes. Then he took off his tie and folded it neatly into the inside pocket of the coat on the knob.

He went out into the long hallway. He walked toward the rectangle of light, pink and feminine, at the other end.

As he stepped inside her room Walter lit a cigarette. He needed it.

"You wanted something, Lorraine?"

"I wanted to ask you about these." Snap went her wrist.

A colorful something sailed through the air. Walter caught it. He leaned against the doorjamb, turning the match packet over and over and stared at it with feigned interest.

The pack was twice as wide as regular commercial matches. Inside, the matches themselves were

double the width of the conventional paper kind. He broke off one, a wide stiff piece of cardboard. He struck it, blew it out, shrugged.

He held the book between thumb and forefinger. The flossy pin-up lamp over Lorraine's big bed reflected light from the match cover's laminated surface. Printed under the lamination was a sketch by a popular cartoonist. It showed a jolly satyr chasing a plush nymph. Type in gold spelled out *The Pan Club*. Obviously a prestige place.

"So?" Walter said. "Matches. For lighting cigarettes."

"That's all you can be any more," Lorraine said. "Snide and vile."

"I didn't come home early to have a fight, Lorraine. Incidentally, why the hell couldn't Mrs. Tanzey have had something waiting in the refrigerator for me?"

Lorraine's thin mouth—it was the feature about her Walter detested most—grew even thinner.

"Mrs. Tanzey didn't expect you home until the five o'clock plane tomorrow. Neither did I. You know very well that Mrs. Tanzey always leaves at five in the winter. She doesn't like to drive back to Hometown when it's too dark."

Walter applied one of the matches to his cigarette. "Bully for her."

"I was so pleased to see you come home early," Lorraine



whined. "Until I saw those. You must have dropped them."

Through his nostrils Walter snorted out smoke. "For God's sake, Lorraine, you haven't been pleased about anything I've done for the last three or four years."

"I might say the same about you. You needn't have troubled to rent a car and drive home early if you were simply coming home to fight, Walter."

Carefully Walter reached past Lorraine's shoulder to the headboard and a small, delicate porcelain ashtray with a gilt edge. Lorraine kept the tray around mostly for ornamental purposes, using it only occasionally for a cigarette in bed. There was one short, bent butt with a touch of lipstick in the tray.

Walter tapped some ash into the tray and, smiling at his wife, thought, *Go ahead and wince, you shrew. While you still can.*

After a puff or two he put the cigarette out. He found he wanted another almost at once. He discov-

ered that the packet of matches he'd used while coming in here was empty. He threw it in the lace-edged waste basket near the bed and used a match from the night club packet. He kept studying Lorraine, delighting in her growing nervousness.

Once his wife had been pretty. He could recall that early stage of their marriage with some modest pleasure. But the sight she presented now was revolting. She'd lost weight, was down to nearly one hundred pounds, and her refusal to have her graying hair dyed didn't help, either.

She was stretched out under the silk sheet with several pillows behind her head. She wore a pink wrapper with a frothy front. The garment looked ridiculous on a woman of her meager figure. A novel lay open beside her hand. On the book's clear plastic library binding her fingers went *ticka-ticka-tick*.

"I came home early," Walter said, having reminded himself that patience would be required at this point, "because Mr. Robbins and I only got to discuss things for half a day, rather than for the day and a half we'd planned. Robbins had to fly to the Coast suddenly. I found I couldn't get plane space tonight so I rented a car. After all, it's only three hundred miles. I might add that everything went off neatly. I have the new job—"

"That's the first you've even

bothered to tell me," she complained.

"Because I'm tired, Lorraine. Extremely tired. It's cold. The roads were icy."

"You're really saying you're tired of me." Lorraine's eyes were tiny and hard. "Aren't you really saying that?"

"I'm saying that I don't want to argue, Lorraine."

She sniffed. "You've certainly spent a lot of time in the city lately."

"My contacts as a sales manager are very important. Those contacts got me the job with Mr. Robbins's firm. Besides, I've explained the importance of business trips a dozen times. A hundred times. A million times, Lorraine."

Walter knew he was getting out of control. He checked his temper, adding, "Is there anything else you'd like to know?"

She just sniffed.

He tossed up the fancy match pack and caught it. Then, quickly, he dropped it into the pocket of his dressing gown, afraid he had been somewhat obvious. He patted her legs beneath the sheet.

"Excuse me, Lorraine. I'm going to my room."

Lorraine's mouth was by now the barest slash. "The matches, Walter."

A little apprehensive, yet pleased, he drew them out again.

"These? I thought—"

"No, Walter, you didn't explain. Did Mr. Robbins take you to that place?"

"The Pan Club? Lorraine, let's not discuss—"

"We will discuss it, Walter. We definitely will discuss it."

He sighed.

"Lorraine, you know I'm not a man given to lying. Can't we just let it go?"

"Is that supposed to be some sort of threat?" she exclaimed. "Don't ask, Lorraine! Don't ask him or dear Walter, he's so painfully honest, he may tell you. Well, Walter, I see through your shoddy little tricks. In the first place—" *Tick* went her nail against the plastic jacket of the novel—"you're very much a man of habit. In all the years we've been married, the times when you've left anything behind you—your keys, your wallet, anything—are so rare I can remember them all. To have dropped that packet of matches onto the bed when you first came in, while you were pretending to hunt for the keys to that rented car, isn't like you at all."

Exasperated, he stubbed out the cigarette in the ornamental tray, deriving a certain vicious satisfaction in seeing ash blacken the face of the enamelled shepherdess painted in the bottom.

"Now who's being ridiculous, Lorraine? Can't a man break a habit from time to—"

"Of course," she interrupted

sweetly. "If that's all it was, But was it?"

Now Walter's fist was shaking at his side. He was, he admitted privately, making a pretty good show of the whole bit. "What the hell is that supposed to mean, Lorraine?"

"That you dropped the matches on purpose."

"Why on earth—"

"So I'd notice them, Walter."

When her husband sucked in his breath almost without thinking about it, Lorraine shook a brilliantly tipped but thin finger at him.

"It's the truth, isn't it? A little charade on your part. Courteous, honest Walter. Can't come right out and say it, so you just pretend to drop some matches from some fancy nightclub because you know that will bring it into the open. And torture me a bit in the process. Yes, torture. Well, Walter, what is it? You're devious, but I've caught you now."

Surprise registered on Lorraine's face as Walter began to chuckle.

"May I ask what's so amusing?"

"You are," he said. "I just realized, Lorraine, you're a very sly bitch. Much more sly than I ever thought."

Her scrawny cheek muscles worked. "How dare you use such filthy language!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Silence.

Walter felt immense relief, immense satisfaction at having used such direct, forceful words for the first time since the gnawing dislike of the whole rotten situation got out of hand several months ago.

"If you're so damned clever," he said, "what was I trying to tell you with those matches? Can you guess that?"

"Yes, Walter, I can. You went to that place with a woman."

"Well. Aren't you smart. Smarter and smarter by the moment."

"Then it's true?"

"Of course it's true. How do you suppose I could stand living with someone like you month after month and not turn to another woman for a little warmth, a little affection? If you must know it all, her name's Karen. She's just in her twenties. She works for Mr. Robbins's firm, and we're very much in love.

"Yes, Lorraine, we are in love with each other and I intend to marry her. You're right, I am devious. I don't know why. Maybe I just simply enjoy it. Or maybe I really haven't got the guts to come right out in the open. But we've come out in the open now, haven't we? So if you'll excuse me, I think I'll go to bed."

And, tossing the matches up and catching them once more, he left the room.

He took three steps down the darkened hallway. Three more.

He was now halfway to his room.

He was afraid she wouldn't want to continue the argument. If he were forced to re-open it himself, he wouldn't get nearly the satisfaction out of playing the scene to the end. And, much as he wanted Karen, he also wanted the satisfaction.

"Walter!"

He turned back, quickly stifling the smile.

At her bedroom door he stood staring questioningly.

Lorraine pursed her lips in a bitter smile. "How do you propose to live your usual high type of life after you marry this little tart of yours?"

"What do you mean?" he said, though he knew perfectly well.

"Why, even with your new job, your new title—I'm sure it will be a high-sounding one, knowing how much you value appearances—how do you propose to afford a house like this? And all the other little touches? Because, Walter dear you're never going to get any divorce settlement from me. It'll be the other way around. I'll plead that I'm an invalid and I'll take you for every last penny. I'll bleed you with payments until your sweet little bride, this Karen, this tart, discovers she didn't marry a big executive but a miserable pauper!"

Walter swallowed hard. Though he had no way of being absolutely sure, he felt that it was a good effect.

"I thought—I always thought you'd be—"

"Amiable? When it came to something like this? You misjudged me."

"You're a worse bitch than I imagined." He looked stricken. But he really felt that things couldn't be going better.

Lorraine became very business-like. "I'd advise you to think about it awhile, Walter."

Looking angry, he flung the match packet on the bed. He turned and rushed back into his bedroom and slammed the door. He couldn't suppress another smile, but he did stifle his urge to laugh.

Still, the next hour wore his nerves raw. So did the second hour behind the closed door. At last, minus his dressing gown—that would make his exit easier—he returned to Lorraine's bedroom where the light still shone.

"You win," he said. "I won't leave you."

Lorraine smirked. "That's being sensible."

"Can we go to sleep now?"

"Yes. Here."

She stretched forward, winced uncomfortably, picked up the glossy match packet from where Walter had thrown it in his moment of apparent dismay. "Get rid of them, please."

Walter Jonson stared at her for a long and thoughtful moment. He hadn't intended it to happen this

soon. Rather, he'd planned it for later in the night, when he would be absolutely safe from detection.

But all at once he realized he didn't have that much to worry about. The nearest neighbor was two miles down the road. And this was too marvelous an opening to miss.

"Yes, Lorraine. I certainly will get rid of them."

Was everything in order? He thought so.

The coat on the knob in the closet. Five seconds to get that.

Then the rented car in the driveway.

An assumed name, of course. Just three hundred miles back to the city. His reservation on the five o'clock plane home tomorrow night still confirmed and held. He'd return home as scheduled, unless an emergency phone call reached him earlier. He tore off one, two, three of the thick paper matches.

He laid the matches on the edge of the bed. He picked up the first, struck it.

"Walter, what are you doing?"

"Exactly what you asked, my dear. Getting rid of these matches."

"Walter—" Her panic was amusing.

One thin, veined hand indicated her limp legs stretched out beneath the sheet. "I can't—you know I'm not able—"

"Certainly," he replied. "That's been the trouble ever since the

accident—being married to half a woman.”

She tried to move herself. She tried to drag herself to the edge of the bed. But of course she couldn't. By the time Walter had retrieved his suit coat from the closet knob, the bedding had caught nicely.

Giving a last look into the bedroom, he smiled and hurried on down the stairs. He certainly hoped that in her last moments, she would realize that she hadn't been able to read all of his thoughts.

Lorraine began to scream as Walter opened the front door. Smoke drifted down from upstairs. By the foyer light he observed the outdoor thermometer. At least fifteen below already. The cold hit his lungs painfully as he closed the door and stepped into the night.

He hurried toward the rented car parked in the driveway up close to the single garage. His fingers stung as he touched the door handle on the driver's side.

The door wouldn't open.

Frowning, Walter tried to shut out the sound of Lorraine's yells.

He hurried around to the other side, tried the right hand door.

That one wouldn't open either.

The rental automobile was a hard top model, just two doors. All the windows were rolled up tight. Walter began to breathe faster as he pulled at the right door handle. Damn the cold weather. The locks were frozen.

He couldn't get either lock to budge, no matter how hard he pulled or hammered or pried. And he didn't dare smash a window. That would arouse too much suspicion.

He thought of his own car inside the garage. But he couldn't get it out with the rented car parked in gear and blocking the driveway.

Inside the house the rosy light grew. Lorraine's screams went on and on. Walter Jonson beat on the left door handle, beginning to whimper.

Suddenly, he had an idea. My God, he was letting panic ruin him. There was a simple, easy way. Unfreeze the locks. All it took was a couple of—

But of course he was out of matches.

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WE'LL TRADE EVEN

A slum boy without hope . . . a girl without a chance . . . together they waited for the darkness and the death that would come with it. There was no way back. But —there was one last impossible gamble to stay alive . . .

by **EDWARD Y. BREESE**



THE GIRL CAME out of the country club dance on the arm of a young guy wearing a tuxedo and a white turtle-neck sweater. She was eighteen and looked twenty-five in the arc lights. Her dress had sequins on it and her eyes sparkled too. It was obvious she'd had a great evening.

Turtle-neck walked her to his car — a flashy white convertible — and opened the door for her to get in. As she did, Tony Burns seemingly appearing out of nowhere, got in from the other side and slid behind

the wheel. His companions, Rocky and Sam, came up on each side of Turtle-Neck. Sam tried a rabbit punch that the kid dodged by ducking under the punch. Rocky's knee came up as his face came down. That staggered the young guy and took out a couple of his teeth.

Then Rocky and Sam stood back and slugged him back and forth like a medicine ball.

They took his car keys and wallet, gave Tony the keys, and climbed into the back seat of the convertible.

Terror on the Run



Sam said; "Home, James." and Tony floored the pedal.

Up to then the girl hadn't come out of shock. Now she tried to get the door open and jump out, even though the car was already doing sixty down the club's curving drive. Rocky reached over and got her by the shoulders. He pulled her down and held her from trying to stand up again.

"Keep your cool, sweetie," he yelled to her. "You ain't going no place."

Except in this car with us," Sam added to keep the record straight.

"If you rape me, I'll kill you," she said, making a real effort to sound calm and deadly. "I swear I'll kill you. If I miss, my father'll hire it done."

Tony knew her father had money enough to buy their heads twenty times over. If he had her guts, he'd do it too.

"Cool it," Tony said. "Just cool it, Miss Wilson. We don't have to rape nobody to get it. That ain't what this is about. This is a snatch. Just a plain, everyday, businesslike snatch, see?"

"Oh," she said, "a kidnaping?"

"For money," Sam said from the back seat.

"Who are you?" he said. "What makes you think you can get away with it?"

"We *are* getting away with it right now," Sam said. "We're the Varsity Crew."

That's what they called them-

selves, mostly because it didn't fit any way you looked at it. There were nine of them, running from fifteen years old to twenty-two, and not one of the nine had got past tenth grade in school. Their neighborhood was close to the river, but the only boat they'd ever rowed was a skiff used to rob the docks one summer.

It was easy to figure how tough they were just by saying only the nine were the whole gang. There were mighty few small, independent outfits left these days. The ordinary rumble would feature a hundred guys to a side. They survived because they trusted each other to be a little faster, a little smarter, and just a little tougher than the opposition could offer.

Sam and Fats had started the Crew. The rest were all hand-picked for special abilities. Tony was nineteen, a driver who could thread needles with a stock car and handle a gun. They called him Tony because he was black Irish and looked Italian.

This particular caper was Sam's idea. He'd seen Dodie Wilson's picture in papers and magazines. It was no secret her old man could shake a couple of million out of his private money tree any time with no trouble. Everybody in town knew that.

It took Sam to find out she spent part of every summer with her mother. Mother was now Mrs. Somebody-else with a fourth hus-

band and a country estate only twenty miles out of town.

"She can't afford guards like old Wilson can," Sam had pointed out. "The new husband's only middle rich. They even let the kid go out alone. All we gotta do is learn her routine and grab her. In an hour we're back at home base and setting up the payoff."

"A million," Fats said. "Just think about lovely, green, million clams."

"Oh, shut up, Fats," Sam said.

"Waddaya mean, shut up? We'd be crazy to settle for less."

"We'd be crazier not to settle for a lot less," Tony said.

"Explain it to him, Tony," Sam said.

"For a million bucks, you jerk," he said to Fats, "every cop, every shamus, every heist man and hood in the world will be looking for us. Maybe even the Syndicate puts out a contract on us for such dough. We wouldn't last, not long enough to more'n start spending it. There'd be so many tails sniffing after us we'd each look like a parade."

"That's it," Sam had backed him up. "We take a reasonable profit and maybe we get to keep it."

"I never thought of that," Joe Aces said.

"That's why I'm the boss," Sam said.

The whole snatch was easy as knocking over a gas station. Sam found out she went to the club every Saturday night and left early. All



they had to do was wait and rub her boy friend out of the picture.

Tony kept the car on the expressway back to the City. That way he could hold her on seventy without attracting attention. Once in town he left the white bus in a movie-house parking lot.

It was easy to find an old heap that the owner'd forgot to take his keys out of. They went cross town by back streets and alleys.

"You can drive," the girl said when he threaded traffic. It was the first time she'd opened up.

"It's my specialty," Tony explained. "That's why they give me the job."

"Oh," she said. "Are you all specialists?"

"You don't ask fool questions," Rocky said. "Then nobody gonna have to lie to you. Understand?"

"Oh," she said. "I hadn't thought of it that way."

"From now on do."

The car they'd driven out to the club had been stolen just for this job, and been left sitting there. The white convertible was abandoned with the key still in the ignition. They hoped some punk would steal it again and get picked up to take some of the heat off the crew.

The last car pulled into an alley and stopped.

"Take that dress off, sister," Sam told her.

"I will *not!* You said this wasn't—"

"It isn't," he said. "We got a ways to walk now. In this neighborhood that dance dress would sort of stand out, see? Take it off and put these on." He gave her a sweat shirt and a pair of cheap slacks that belonged to his true love. They were fresh-washed and fitted, if a bit loosely in spots.

Sam wadded up the evening dress in a paper sack. It would be sent to her daddy as proof they had her, in case he doubted it.

They had about five blocks to go on foot. That way, even if the fuzz connected the car in the alley, it wouldn't do them any good. On the second block they passed a patrol of the Royal Owls headed by Buck Sakara. They'd been smoking pot, and smelled of it.

Dodie kept her face turned away from them. Even she could see these weren't the sort of kids would rescue her.

The place they took her was a condemned factory building down by the river. The windows was all smashed out, a few pieces of machinery rusting to scrap, and the floors rotten with termites and mold. The locks and hinges had been stolen out of the doors.

They took her down a flight of crumbling concrete steps to what had been the boiler room in the basement. Joe Aces met them there. When he was sure who it was, he lit a candle.

They'd fixed the place up in advance with a couple of cots, candles, a kerosene two-burner cooking unit and some other junk. There was even a old fashioned ice chest with a chunk of ice in it to keep food, and some gallon jugs of drinking water.

"What is this place?" the girl asked, peering into the shadows.

"It's your new home, sweetie," Sam said. "You're gonna live here till daddy buys you out."

"I still think we should ought to bury her," Rocky said.

"What do you mean, bury me? My father will kill you, no matter how far you run."

"We won't do it," Tony said. "Rocky got the idea from that guy in Georgia who snatched the girl and put her in a box. There ain't enough dirt left in the ground here to bury a cat."

"In the old park," Rocky said.

"A hole in the ground there

would be like putting her name up in lights," Sam said. "Besides I bet there ain't six inches of dirt over the rock even there. Forget it, this is the place."

He took a pair of handcuffs he'd got in one of their pawnshop heists and gave them to Tony. "If you need sleep, fasten the broad to one of them iron pipes. We'll be in touch on schedule."

He and Rocky and Joe went back up the steps and out of the building.

Dodie and Tony sat in old chairs and watched each other across the peeling top of a kitchen table. Even in that hole and with only the light of the one candle, she still looked like what she was. Her eyes were soft-brown and alive with some sort of light inside. They never just stared like some dames do. Her shoulder-length hair had a beautiful wave and looked so clean and soft he wanted to put his hands in and stroke it.

Her hands were soft, clean and cared for, but no nonsense. The nails were trimmed back so she could use her hands if she wanted to. Most of the broads Tony knew had long nails and painted them neon red.

Even in the clothes she had on, her curves went in and out in the right places. Most women looked like they'd been carved out by somebody with a dull chisel, but every inch of this one was in perfect proportion. Her face wasn't

pretty, but it had a sort of beauty of its own. It belonged to a person who used it to look out at the world.

"Who are you?" she asked. "What really is going on here? Do you really think you can get away with this?"

"You get right to the guts of it, don't you?" he said. "I'm Tony, and it's a gang that has you, and I ain't giving out any details you can trace us by. Nobody ain't going to find you here. I stay and guard you while the rest of them make contact and set up the payoff. After—we split up a hundred fifty grand and get out of this town. Let the fuzz look for us where we ain't."

"You mean after you kill me, don't you?"

"I mean no such thing," he said. "We don't want any murder rap. We're even keeping the ransom low enough your old man won't miss it. Murder and they'd never stop looking for us. Besides I ain't no killer."

"Your friend Sam is." Dodie was serious. "He knows kidnaping is a capital crime, and he knows I've seen him. He won't dare let me go."

"You're wrong," Tony said. "You got to be wrong. Anyway the rest of us wouldn't let him."

"Can you stop him? Are the rest going to be with you or him?"

She leaned forward and blew out the candle. It put her just enough off balance so she stumbled trying to jump up. Tony dived forward across the table and caught a fold

of the sweatshirt. She hadn't figured he'd be so fast. She slugged with a hard right hand. She could box like a man.

When she backed off he let her pull him over to her side of the table without letting go. He stumbled, trying to get on his feet, but managed to get both arms around her knees. It was pitch dark, but he didn't need light. She fell down on the floor, and after a while he had her arms pinned too. That's when she stopped struggling.

"Okay," she said almost in his face. "I give up."

Tony got the handcuffs out of his pocket with one hand and put one around her wrist and the other on the table leg. Then he got up and lit the candle again.

"Nice try, Dodie."

"Not good enough," she said. "What happens now?"

"Nothing," he said. "I don't blame you for trying, but I don't think you will again. You don't really want to break out of here, if you just think about it. This time of night in this part of town you wouldn't get three blocks before one of them night-crawlers got you. Then you'd wish to God you were still here with me."

Tony could see her shudder at the idea.

"I never thought of that. I guess I was foolish."

"How would you know?" he said. "You never lived here."

He put her on one of the cots

and handcuffed her to the iron frame. Even in summer it was cool enough down there for a blanket.

"Aren't you going to blow out the candle, Tony? I promise I won't—"

"It ain't that," he cut in. "I just don't like rats running over me."

DAWN CAME EARLY and a grey, dirty light filtered down the stair well from the factory. Tony lit the kerosene stove and fried up eggs and a can of Spam. He put coffee to boil on the second burner and got some Danish pastries out of a sack. Then he took the handcuffs off and let her come to the table. She was hungry.

"Now we just wait," he said. "By this time the guys will've contacted your old man. Everybody in the world will be looking for you—only they won't look here."

"I suppose I'd better hope they don't," she said. "Did Sam tell you to shoot me if they did?" She had felt the gun under his jacket when they'd wrestled in the dark.

"No," Tony lied. "Besides I wouldn't do it even if he had."

"You think they'd go easier on you if I'm alive?"

"I don't think so, Dodie. It's just that while I sure ain't no angel, I ain't that kind of killer either."

"I believe you," she said. "I do. Say, why don't you talk like in the movies? Cool and dig and words like that, man?"

He laughed at her. "This is no

movie. Besides I got other things to think about than playing tough games."

"And you've already figured out you need a better vocabulary to think in. When a word like cool is used to mean everything, it really doesn't mean anything, does it, really?"

They sat and talked for a couple of hours while they finished the pot of coffee. Neither one wanted to get too personal, but both learned things that surprised them.

They might have gone on like that all day, or at least till it was too late, if she hadn't had such good ears. She cocked her head suddenly, and then put a finger to her lips. In the silence Tony heard it too. There were people upstairs trying to walk quietly on the rotten concrete floor.

"Don't move," he whispered. "It ain't cops."

He pulled out the big gun he carried in a belt holster. It was a .45 revolver, the kind that uses cartridges in half-moon clips. His father stole it from the army in 1918. The first time Tony fired the gun it had just about broken his wrist, but he practiced till he could shoot pretty well. It was a real cannon. Hit a man any place at all, and the terrific shock of it would paralyze him.

Whoever was up there was too quiet for fuzz, Tony thought, and too many to be any of his guys. He knew they'd smell what had been



cooking in time so he sneaked up the stair, lay down on the last few steps, and looked around the door frame, keeping his face down real low.

There were about a dozen guys in Royal Owl sweatshirts picking their way around the dead machinery. Their patrol must have seen him come into the building last night and, when the morning news came out, they'd guessed who the girl might be. That sort of honey draws flies every time.

They had guns and switchblades and motor-bike chains. There were too many of them for one boy to handle alone. To make it worse one of them saw him and snapped off a shot. He pulled back down the stairs.

Dodie was waiting. She was scared white, but he could tell by the way her jaw set that she'd follow his lead.

"It's the Owls," he said, forgetting she didn't know what that meant. "We got to get away from here now."

She just nodded. He led her back towards the old boilers where a hole had been broken through the brick partition wall. She stepped through ahead of him.

That was the exact minute the Owls rushed the stairs, led by Gus "Shiv" Squarcia, who was a big man on their executive committee. Gus had a sawed off "corn sheller" shotgun, but he was looking over towards the table where the candle still burned. Tony saw him clear against the light, but he never saw Tony at all.

Tony stepped just clear of the emergency "doorway" and got a good two-handed grip on the big gun. When he fired the first slug hit Gus right in the solar plexus. The shock of it stiffened every nerve in his body and slammed him back with force enough to knock down the man behind him. Other hands grabbed both of them and pulled them back out of sight.

After that there wasn't much point in hurrying. It would be a while before the next Owl worked up his nerve to try those stairs.

"Why don't we stay and hold them off?" Dodie asked.

"Because," Tony said, "there's a hundred and twenty-some Owls in all. This was just a taste of them. Gus Squarcia probably thought his team could surprise us. That way

they wouldn't have to split with the rest of his pals. The rest of them know better now. In twenty minutes this place will be bottled up tight. They'll be all over this block like roaches on a chocolate cake."

She gagged at that. "Oh no, Tony."

He led her through a tangle of locker room, lavatories, storage rooms and hallways that underlay the work room. Fallen bricks and plaster almost blocked some of the passages, but he knew just what he was looking for.

Finally Tony found it, an old door opening out under what was left of the dock on the river side of the building. There were big black rats crawling down there and the river stunk of sewage as usual. He thought Dodie was going to lose her breakfast, but she took it like a man. At least they were out of the factory and under cover at the same time.

"Tony," she said, holding tight to his shoulder, "h-how many men have you killed?"

"You can believe it or not, but that was the first. It's likely he won't be the last either. Not even the last today."

"I'm glad he was the first. Tony, what will we do now?"

"I'm going to work us down the river a ways. There used to be one long loading dock ran three or four blocks right along here. Most of the docking is rotten now, but the stone

foundations are still here — I think. Anyway, we go find out.

"You stay right with me and always hang on to something with at least one hand. Some of this footing is slimy and slippery like it was buttered. If you do fall in, don't try to swim and don't let the current take you. Grab the first thing you can and hang on. I'll come and get you."

"Tony?"

"Yeah?"

"Tony — are there sharks?"

He had to laugh. "Dodie, no shark could live three minutes in that stinking goop. Only small eels and mighty few of them."

"Oh."

They were in luck. Originally a heavy timber platform had been built to extend about twenty-five feet out from the bank for a length of almost half a mile. Opposite each factory or warehouse a pier had been built out another fifty feet so barges could load and unload with no trouble.

After the area went downhill so bad, nobody'd bothered to keep up the piers. Some had rotted away or fallen into the river. None of them were safe. The loading platform was still there — mostly because its timbers anchored to a rock foundation wall built against the river bank and running a couple of feet above high tide mark. It was slimy and littered and dangerous in the dim light, but it could be used with caution by careful people.

Dodie and Tony were careful. He spent almost an hour in spite of having a flashlight in getting them down to the end. Then he had to climb up through a hole in the timbers. He went first and then reached down for Dodie's wrists and pulled her up after him. They were back of an empty warehouse.

Once they got out, he threw his belt holster back into the river, found some old newspaper and wrapped the gun so he could carry it like a bundle. It was so big that in daylight he really couldn't hide it under a jacket.

"Dodie," he said. "We got to go on the street now. Once we do somebody'll hear you, if you want to yell. I can't stop you without killing you, and you know I don't want to do that. I don't want anybody down here to get their hands on you either. No telling what they might do. This ain't like the side of town you've lived on before. If you give me your word to cooperate I think maybe we can make it to a safe place. What do you say?"

"All right," she said seriously.

"You have my parole."

"Your what?"

"My parole, Tony. That means my promise not to try anything."

He took her word for it, which was odd. He'd been raised not to trust anybody, not really even Sam or Rocky or his father. Here he was trusting a girl he saw yesterday for the first time.

"We're out of the Owl district

now. This territory belongs to the West Side Tigers," he said. "I don't think they're wise to us yet, but be real careful."

"Why didn't the Owls come after us last night?" Dodie asked.

"They didn't suspect till your picture came out on TV and in the papers this morning. Even then they couldn't be sure till I shot Gus. Up to then it was mostly just a chance to catch some of the Crew off base. They couldn't have seen you real clear last night. Gus must've made a lucky guess. Anyway it's a good thing they waited."

It was just about then that Tony realized they were being tailed. The guy had passed going the other way, then apparently stopped and turned back to follow. This was no kid either. He was about fifty, with the shifty look of an ex-con. He had on yellow slacks and a green sport jacket and one of those little narrow-brim bennies. He was smaller than Tony and looked like he weighed only about eighty-five pounds, but two of them stood for a rod under his arm. He stayed about half a block back.

"We got a tail, baby," Tony said. "He ain't no cop either. I dunno who he is but it ain't a cop. We're going to turn into an alley right quick. When we do, you run up a ways and hide in a doorway or back of a trashpile. I'll take care of nosey-Parker and come after you." She just nodded. Dodie was learning fast.

When the little guy slid into the alley after Tony, he slapped him over the ear with the barrel of his gun. He said: "Pleasant dreams."

Tony dragged him back of a couple of garbage cans. Like he'd guessed, the little guy was packing a cannon, a German military automatic. Tony took it along. There was no identification in his wallet, but Tony liberated a couple of hundred in small bills.

He got Dodie out of the doorway and hustled her through to the next stret. "Who was it, Tony?" she asked.

"Don't know," he said. "Just another Mr. Badnews for us. We got to get behind a locked door someplace, sweetie. We ain't safe on the street."

"Where are you really taking me?"

"I know a place near here. It ain't a nice place, but it oughta be a lot safer than the streets till after dark anyway."

"That's not it, Tony. You know I'm smart enough to guess that part, but what comes after? If you take me back to Sam and your friends, you know they'll never dare let me go."

"I've got a vote," he said and showed her the German gun. "Two votes with this baby. I won't let even the Crew hurt you. I promise."

"I believe you'd try, Tony, but you'll be outnumbered. Suppose they decide to kill you too? What then? On the other hand if you take

me home, I'll see that my father pays you something. There'll be a reward. He won't bring any charges either, not after I talk to him."

"You're asking me to double-cross the Crew," he said. "I'm no fink, Dodie."

"I know that," she said quickly. "I proved it when I gave you my parole. I just don't think you're a killer either, and trusting your friends could get us both killed. It doesn't have to be that way, you know. Think about it."

He was worried about plenty of things right then, but he was trying not to show it. It wasn't easy.

They twisted through side streets and back alleys till he got her to Joe Aces' place. Actually it was his mother's place. Downstairs, there was a bar in the front part and a place for her and Joey to live in the back while his old man was doing ten-to-twenty up the river.

Upstairs there were four or five rooms she rented to couples or let the women who worked the bar crowd take their customers up to. She knew Tony for Joe's pal, so he knew she'd let them use one of the rooms. It was easy. She must of figured Dodie for some broad he had a yen for. There were customers and she didn't pay much attention—just gave Tony the key and a gin bottle about half full off the shelf.

"If Joe calls, you tell him I'm there," he said. She just nodded to show she heard.



It was a crummy room. Everything in it was dirty, including the sheets and the mirror over the chest. He'd taken one of the two front rooms so he could watch the street and because it connected to a wash-room where Dodie could clean up and comb out her hair.

She did a real good job of it. He felt like whistling when she came back. He'd pulled the old wooden blind down and pushed a chair over to watch the street without being seen. She took the other chair. Neither of them wanted any part of that bed. They didn't even open the gin bottle either.

They just sat and talked, mostly about themselves. The life she'd lived was like nothing he'd ever heard before. Some of the words she used; he didn't even know what they meant. She felt the same way

about things he told her. They were just the facts of life to him.

Her city apartment had eighteen room on two floors. It was less than five miles, like the crow flies, from where they were right then.

Finally she said; "Tony, I want you to tell me the truth. What were you planning to do with your share of the ransom? Honest, now."

"I was going to use it to bust out of this neighborhood," he said. "I figured it was enough for me to go to another town and finish high school to start with. I wanted a nice town where I could maybe meet some nice people."

"That's funny," she said. "You know your way around here, and you're a born leader. You could go far here."

"Where would I go, Dodie? A short life and not a very merry one and a slab in the morgue for the last act. I don't like it here. I want to do something important some day. I want to be able to like myself. After high school I figured I'd get one of them government grants for college that I read about in the papers. I could maybe end up a lawyer or an engineer."

"My father always said," she said quietly, "that kidnaping was the stupidest of all possible crimes. The victim has to be killed, and that makes it murder. Nobody ever gets to spend the ransom before he's caught. Why would you go along with a deal like that?"

"A guy's got to take a chance.

Where else could I find that kind of money?" he said. "Besides I wasn't going to stay around and blow the money. I'd get right out of town and not spend any till things blew over. Besides you wasn't going to be murdered."

She didn't argue that. He knew by now she didn't believe it either, but she changed the subject again. "How come you were left to guard me all by yourself?"

"Lots of reasons," he said. "We didn't think anybody'd find the place. The Owls were just bad luck. We figured if a lot of us dropped out of sight it might put the finger on us. They knew I wouldn't do you any harm, but would take care of you. One of us could do that just as well as three or four, I guess."

"I see," she said. "I was lucky."

It was about then that the big car parked across the street, there were four men inside. The two in back got out and walked into the bar. In a few minutes they came back out. One of them got in the back seat again. The other walked up the street and around the corner where he could find a pay phone. From there he could find a place to watch the back door to the house.

Tony pointed them out to Dodie when they drove up, and watched through the blinds.

"Who are they, Tony?"

"I'm afraid I know," he said. "I recognized one. They work for a hood named Peanuts Antilla. I think maybe the little rat I worked

over in the alley must be one of the same mob."

"How on earth would they know to come here?"

"Easy. Real easy," Tony said. "The little guy probably knew you from your pictures. I guess he recognized me for one of the Crew while he was at it. They'd know I'd go to ground after slugging him, and this was the nearest place I'd feel safe. They could find out quick enough that Joey's mother ran this place. When they asked her right now — even if she lied they knew it."

"What will they do?"

"Nothing till it gets dark. They won't want anybody to see you being pulled out of here. Other folks look at pictures too. They know I'll see them and won't make a break by daylight. The back of this place is plugged by now. They'll just wait and let me get scared by what they can do, if I fight them."

A little while after Joey's mother came up with a pot of coffee and a plate of thick meat sandwiches.

"Tony," she said, "you shouldn't be here. You hadn't ought to bring Peanuts after a poor old lady. Your pal's mother too. I told 'em I ain't seen you, but I don't think they believed me. They're still out front."

"Don't worry," he said. "Don't worry. We'll get out after dark. That's all they want. They won't start anything here."

"Make sure you do. I just don't want no trouble."

After she'd gone Dodie and Tony ate the sandwiches in silence. Finally Dodie spoke up; "You think we can shot our way out?"

"No," he said. "I don't think so. Peanuts' boys are real pros. I couldn't really fight them. We can't sneak away either."

"If you started shooting out the window and they shot back, wouldn't that mean the police would come?"

"Sooner or later, yes, but that would mean deliberately turning you over and putting the finger on my friends. I can't do that."

She said; "You say that now. Can you turn me over to your boys to be killed?"

"I told you I won't let them kill you. I promise it."

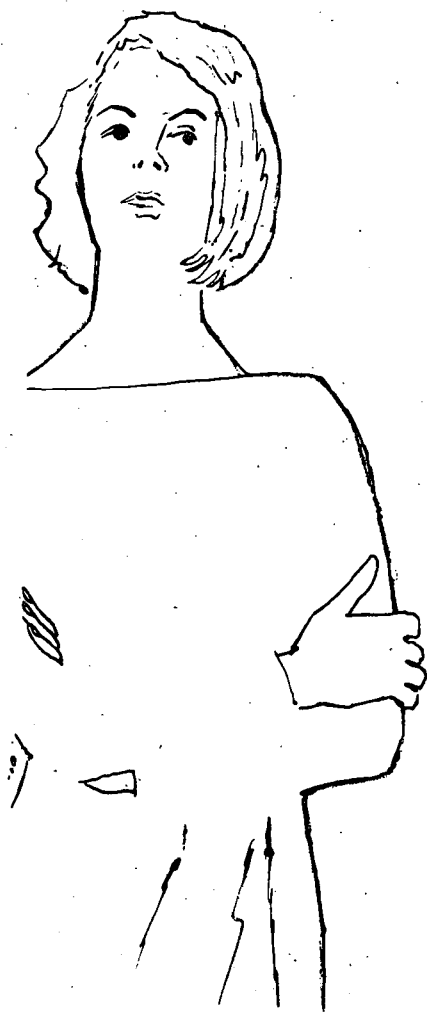
"You promise them and you promise me, Tony. I think you meant it both times. But how about when one of those promises has to cancel out the other. What about that? Which promise do you keep then? Which one?"

"I don't know!" he yelled. "Don't you see I can't decide now? I have to find a way to keep both."

"Have your loyalty and eat it too," she said bitterly. "Nobody else has done it yet that I know of."

"Shut up," Tony said.

After that they just waited till it got dark. There really wasn't anything else Tony could do. He knew she was right. He knew he couldn't



let her die and *couldn't* fink on his friends. He saw a lot of things he hasn't really faced about himself before.

Right after dark he was surprised

to see Sam come up the street and stop to talk to the three hoods in the car. He saw his face under the street light when he passed the corner, and he was wearing a new blue, double-breasted blazer he couldn't mistake. He told Dodie.

"What's he doing?"

"I don't know, Dodie, but we'll find out soon enough. Here he comes across the street."

He put the German gun under the mattress out of sight, and stuck the big gun through his belt. He put Dodie in the bathroom, and met Sam in the hall. Of course he didn't turn on any lights. Sam was at the top of the stairs trying to decide which door to try. Tony waved him into the room.

"A fine mess you got us in." Sam got right to the point. "First you start a vendetta with the Owls. Then you let one of Peanuts' hoods see you, then rough him up, then hole up here where he can't help but find you."

All Tony could say was: "Was you there, Sharlie?"

"Okay. Maybe it couldn't be helped. How do I know? But Peanuts called me in. He's guessed who she is, and we got to turn her over to him. Otherwise he'll hold the whole Crew responsible."

"Sam, we can't. You know he'll kill her just as soon as her old man pays off."

"It seems reasonable," Sam said. "Trouble is we got no choice. There's twenty gunsels hid out

around here now. We can't fight and we can't run. Give him the broad and we can walk away."

"I promised her her life," Tony said. "I can't ever walk away from myself if I go back on that. Don't you see?"

Then Sam jumped Tony. Neither of them wanted to shoot the other other so they stood toe to toe and slugged. Sam tried to knee Tony and was hit hard while he had one leg up. He fell back, off balance. Then he grabbed for his own gun. Tony wasn't ready—not fast enough.

Dodie came out of the dark bathroom door and grabbed the half-full gin bottle off the dresser top and hit Sam with it. He dropped the gun, and Tony slugged him with a roundhouse right and knocked him out the rest of the way.

Tony took his jacket and gun and tied and gagged Sam on the bed. It'd finally come clear what he had to do.

He put on Sam's jacket. "I'm going downstairs and use the phone," he told Dodie. "The windows are dirty, and in this jacket they'll think it's Sam. If I make it, I'll come back up. If I don't, I'm leaving you Sam's gun and the little guy's. You shoot anything shows on the stairs. You can fire a gun?"

She had sense enough to nod but not try to talk.

They must have seen Tony, but nobody came in to stop him using the phone. They probably thought

he was calling Peanuts. Instead Tony called the nearest Precinct House. When he mentioned Dodie a Lieutenant Scarlatti took the phone. Tony briefed him. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the three men get out of the car and start across the street. Tony knew that meant others he couldn't see were moving in too.

The phone was on the wall by the stairs. He went up fast. First he shoved Dodie back into the bathroom.

That's when the whole caper blew wide open. One of the hoods down below emptied a machine pistol through the floor of their room. Bullets and splinters were flying up all round the uncarpeted floor. Tony and Dodie were pinned down.

Under cover of the ruckus another squirt-gunner came up the stairs. He came through the room door and stood spraddle-legged with his gun in both hands. Then he saw Sam on the bed and gave him a sudden wild burst by pure instinct.

Tony held his big gun in both hands and shot him from behind the bathroom door jamb. It didn't kill him, but the big slug knocked him back out the door and smashed his left shoulder.

Just then there were sirens and red lights flashing and gunshots like a regular battle in the street. Cops and FBI agents and everybody else but Squadron A were coming from all directions. They swept up Pea-

nut's gunsels like dust in front of a broom.

Dodie's father was the first one up the stairs. She ran into his arms. Tony stood there with his hands up until they grabbed him.

The rest of the night was sort of confused. First, they all went to the station house. After Mr. Wilson talked to Dodie, he got Tony released in custody of his lawyers.

"This young man saved her life," Wilson said. "No charges will be filed. He's coming home with us tonight."

Tony Burns went to the Wilson apartment, which was bigger than a house. Servants cried over Dodie and put out food. They sat down to eat.

"Dodie says you want to go to college," Mr. Wilson said. "I'll take care of it."

"I don't want charity," Tony said. "Not from Dodie's family. I didn't do it for that. I'll manage to make out."

"Of course you will," Mr. Wilson said, "and it's not charity. I posted a fifty thousand dollars reward for my daughter. You earned it. If you let me I'll put it in trust temporarily and the income will put you through school."

Tony couldn't say anything for a moment. Then, finally, "I just have to try to get used to the idea."

"Only thing I don't understand," Dodie said. "What decided you? What made up your mind? I was afraid you'd never go against your own gang. So why?"

"I can answer that," Mr. Wilson said. "A man knows a man's way of thinking. Sam sold you out first. Didn't he, Tony?"

"Yes," Tony said. "Loyalty's got to run both ways. When Sam and the rest of them would have sold me as well as Dodie to save their own necks, I was off the hook. That's all it was."

Tony Burns reached for a plate of cold roast beef.

DEAD MAN'S PASSAGE

by EDWARD Y. BREESE

It's JOHNNY HAWK

It's Hard-Hitting!

It's Coming Soon!

BLUEPRINT

by
BASIL WELLS

Can a genius—and a fool—
get away with murder? The
next grim hour would tell.

THE SHORT PLUMP cashier of Ho-
part's First National Bank smiled
down at his wrist watch, and at the
worn black leather bag on the seat



of his respectable three-year-old sedan beside his seat-belted hip.

Nine-thirty of a Friday night. Bank closed from now until Monday morning at nine o'clock. Negotiable bonds, cash crisply bound into neat bundles, and an assortment of valuables from the chosen lock boxes—he could almost see them through the opaque leather of the bag beside him.

Crane Walton headed right up Vestry Street toward the tiny four room dwelling—pastel green with three half-grown maples, a fifty foot square of grass, and ornamental metal fence—where he kept bachelor's quarters. Now that he was away from his hated service role at the bank he felt free to commune with himself, audibly.

Many solitary, and some not-so withdrawn people converse with themselves. But only a few have an Orman Foyll, a happy-go-lucky forty-year-old version of himself, to provide company.

"Guess we carried this off just right, Orman," he mumbled. "Could be eighty-ninety thousand in the bag."

Orman Foyll said nothing. He was chary with words. Usually Crane Walton did all of the talking. For two blocks further nothing more was said. Then Walton laughed.

"Ten years we been planning this," he said. "Ever since we were thirty and Eviline left. Mortgaging the house, and putting all our money in a fund safe from her. Even if she

did come back there's no trail to you."

Orman Foyll made no comment.

Walton swung into the narrow drive between the woven metal fence and the weed-grown wooden fence defining the Perbonnet's neglected lot's perimeter. He keyed the kitchen door's blank wooden barrier and went into the neat homely little room. The bag he zipped open and extracted from it a smaller zippered envelope. This he then wrapped in some stout butcher's paper, secured with a plaster of freezer tape, and stuffed into a grocery sack, along with two grapefruit and a package of corn flakes.

The bag he left open and carried into the living room, where he tossed it on the floor. He mussed the worn red throw rug and upset a chair. Last of all he pushed the centrally located dining table off to one side.

He nodded, looking at his watch.

"Five minutes of ten," he said. "Right on schedule, Orman. Keeps 'em off balance. Won't know if I had confederates and got crossed-up or if I was forced into it. Now to clear town without us getting caught."

Apparently he caught an unspoken question from his companion.

"Oh sure," he agreed. "If things went too far wrong we could always put it back. Might take some work on Monday. A chance it couldn't be carried off. But it can't go wrong."

Picking up the bag with the grapefruit and the cereal and the innocent-

looking package, Walton went out to his car and headed for the northern outskirts of Hopart's modest expanse. Here the railroad and the Tellesee River met and diverged again, and here a shopping plaza and a half-dozen taverns were huddled into the flatness of the river's loop.

Walton parked the car, not too close to one of the taverns, took his grocery bag, and another shopping bag filled with old garments, and walked slowly down the dim street toward the river.

"So far so good," Walton told his alter ego. "Unless someone stole the boat or stove it in, we're set."

The street ended sixty feet from the river bank. Walton turned left along a path that descended to the debris-strewn jungle rimming the water's edge. He saw two distant fires glowing across the stream but none close at hand. Then he came into the muddy little cove where a creek joined the Tellessee, and found the battered little twelve-foot skiff safe in its place.

A dozen other boats of varied shapes and sizes also shared the area. Here in this wasteland there were no docking fees and regulations. Many of the craft were devoid of life jackets or cushions.

From a hiding place in a vine-grown clump of brush Walton took oars. And into the same covert he put the discarded garments of the bank cashier. Into an inner plastic bag where the ancient dungarees and faded blue shirt and battered brown

shoes had but now been, he also put his wallet with its cards and identification.

But in the wrinkled dungarees there was a second soiled and ripped wallet with identification for Orman Foyll of Jack's Hollow, Pennsylvania.

Walton unsnapped the padlock and clicked the oars into their metallic sockets. There was an inch or so of water sloshing in the ribbed bottom, and the seat was gritty, but he did not care. With a pole lying in the craft's bottom he pushed mud and wafted the boat out into the dim moonlight of the main stream.

His goal lay upriver, a matter of five or six miles.

For ten years the old Boyer gravel pit, down next to the Tellesee River, had been owned by a no-account artist and drifter. He'd given white-haired old Reed Boyer five hundred dollars for the worked-out four acres of sumac-rimmed willow-and-weed dotted hollow. There were three shallow freshwater ponds and a shady clump of willows near the drifter's three room shack, and every year clover and grass was reclaiming the gravelly bed of man-made hollow.

Boyer always wondered at the strangeness of humans. This Orman Foyll fellow was a smart enough chap, real handy with tools and skilled with electric wiring and plumbing, but he'd throw all this aside to go bumming off across the country whenever the fancy hit him.

Let Boyer get the mail for him

while he was away. Got a check from some New York bank every three months, around two hundred dollars. He'd showed a couple to Boyer.

Sometimes Boyer would be sitting in his empty house, his wife dead these fifteen years and his two girls off in Illinois, and he'd feel a bit of envy for footloose Orman Foyll. In all his seventy-two years he'd only been twice out past Chicago.

His yellow-and-black no-breed dog, Cortisone, usually stuck around the house pretty close, but today he was gone. Might be he was down at the gravel pit. When this painter fellow, Foyll, was around Cortisone divided his time between the two of them.

Maybe he'd walk the half mile down to the pit after a while and see. There was the envelope from the bank and some advertising and a couple of cardboarded brown manila envelopes for Foyll that had been left in his rural mailbox.

But right now it was easier to sit with his aching old legs up and read one of the hundreds of books that he'd used instead of paper to cover the walls of this comfortable old sitting room.

Walton had left the skiff about a hundred feet up the willow-hidden shallowness of Bent Creek, a mere thousand feet from Boyer's Pit, and chained it there. He had settled on this mode of entrance after a few dozen trial runs of travel by bus, on foot, and by bicycle. Folks around

Jack's Hollow and along Tellesee River were used to seeing no-account Foyll, that painter fellow, in the river at all hours.

The scratching at the rough planks of his three room shack's door aroused him. Daylight already and he'd had only four or five hours of sleep. He yawned, slid off the bunk's rough mattress and went past the big fireplace of laboriously gathered fieldstone to the door.

He grinned at the big yellow-and-black mongrel and scratched him back of his ears.

"Hiya, Cortisone," he said. The dog wriggled and his tail clubbed Walton's leg. "Haven't seen you for a month or so."

He stripped and man and dog went down to the nearest pond and swam. It was June and already comfortably warm. Then they breakfasted: Walton on corn flakes and dried milk, and the dog on stale shredded biscuits. Following which Walton went into the shedlike third room, his workroom, and got out brushes, paint and palette knife.

"Might as well run along home," Walton told the dog. "I'm going to be busy rest of the day."

Cortisone whined and went out into the narrow kitchen.

"Darn funny, Crane," said Walton. In his guise of Orman Foyll he always was the talker and Walton the listener. "Darn funny the way that mutt knows when I arrive at the pit."

He turned a half-finished canvas, depicting a sag-roofed gray barn on

a brushy slope, to catch the proper light. He was taking off the heavy plastic rimmed glasses, that he did not need, in his bankaday role—plain glass, but identified with Foyll—when he heard a rustling, dragging paper sound.

"Corty!" he shouted. "You good-for-nothing thief!"

He ran back into the kitchen. He'd left the bag, carelessly, as befitted a Foyll type, on the rough-boarded floor after extracting the grapefruit and the corn flakes. The plastic zippered bag in the butcher-paper package he had planned to take care of later.

The paper was second-hand. He had brought two pounds of ground meat home in it just last Wednesday.

Cortisone went legging out through the rusty screen door's narrow crack, the door banging shakily, and the pinkish bundle in his jaws. Meat, his canine nostrils had informed him, was hidden somewhere within. But, first, a little distance—

"Come back here!" Walton shouted. Always something like this to muddle a clearly perfect plot. Like a gnat in fresh paint, or—"Corty—here boy!"

The dog raced across the ill-grassed desolation of the gravel pit, with Walton in pursuit. Fortunately he was wearing hard-soled slippers. The rocky debris would have quickly crippled bare feet. He had donned a hacked-off pair of gray slacks.

Up an outer crumbling bank. There were blackberry bushes and



a tangle of thorns. Then an unkempt meadow also full of brambles and sprouting brush. The man's flesh was furrowed and red-streaked. He was swearing and gulping for air, while Cortisone was plainly gaining.

Walton conceded at last. He halted and watched the dog. If he would only investigate and find there was nothing edible, and then leave it alone. Surely he would not carry his loot to the Boyer farm-house.

And Cortisone finally did stop. Walton watched him rip away the paper, pry into the bag, and tear disgustedly at its contents. Paper flew and tattered.

At last the dog moved away, toward the farmhouse a few hundred feet distant through a neglected fruit orchard. Walton waited briefly and then made his painful way across the field to retrieve the ripped container.

"Always something," he told his unseen companion. "We worked this

out to perfection. Never a hitch. And now this."

The scattered papers and the opaque plastic shreds were only a few feet away now.

"Better salvage as much as we can," he told his alter ego. "No use leaving a muss around for Reed Boyer to find."

He started gathering the strips and shreds. Fortunately there was no wind, and was almost finished, pockets and hands bulging. when he became aware of someone standing almost beside him.

Lanky Reed Boyer was gazing steadily at his hands, a puzzled look in his faded blue eyes.

"What's so particular about these newspapers?" he asked, "that you're gathering them up?" His sun-darkened old face brightened with understanding. "Clippings about your painting maybe? And that dog of mine ran off with 'em?"

Walton nodded. In a minute or so he'd be able to swallow and possibly talk again.

"Can't have that," said Boyer.

"But I do hate to chain him all the time—Anyhow, I brought you some mail."

He thrust out the bundle of circulars, envelopes and letters, and Walton managed to free his right fist by stuffing the wadded papers it held into a hip-pocket.

After a few moments more of conversation he headed for the shack.

"So that goes to show you, Mr. Walton," he told himself, once safely back at the gravel pit, "how lucky we were that this was another practice run, and not the real thing.

"In fact," he went on, "I'm swinging to the opinion that neither one of us really wants to steal that money and assume a wholly new identity. For one thing we lack the brass and the courage. For another we're having too much fun play-acting dozens of infallible plots to rob the bank and escape. Isn't that the real truth, Crane Walton?" he finished.

To which the submerged Mr. Walton sheepishly and silently assented.

Some of Next Month's Headliners

A WILD YOUNG CORPSE by BRETT HALLIDAY

THE CRANK by BILL PRONZINI

JUNKIE by MAX VAN DERVEER

PROMISES TO KEEP by EDWARD WELLEN

THE UNLEASHED

Was he an innocent victim—or a devil who rated death? Me, I ought to know. I was gambling my life on the answer . . .

by **NORMAN DANIELS**



I HAD SAT THROUGH four days of the trial and listened to every witness. I watched the police, a bystander, and an accomplice push Vince Harker closer and closer to a first degree murder conviction. When the defense attorney—an inadequate man in my opinion—arose to say that he rested his case, I was unable to be silent any longer.



I felt conspicuous standing there in the middle of the aisle while I spoke loudly. "Your Honor, I have something to say which has a bearing on this case."

A bailiff, twice my size, moved toward me. I thought then, that there must be frequent occasions when crackpots jump up and interrupt a murder trial. But I'm no crackpot. I'm an educated man, successful according to my lights, and the judge must have realized this.

"Let the jury be removed," he ordered, "then we'll hear what this man has to say."

While the jury filed out, I walked up before the bench. The assistant district attorney and the defense attorney were both eying me in a puzzled manner, probably trying to decide whose side I was on. The defendant, a lean, granite-faced individual, hadn't betrayed much emotion during the trial, but he took a sudden and definite interest in me. I would have too, if an utter stranger stepped up in court to interrupt a trial on which my life depended.

"I wish to be placed under oath," I said. "My information is favorable to the defense, Your Honor."

"What is your name and address?" the judge asked. He was definitely interested.

"Roger Jennings, Your Honor. I live at 2209 Waverly Place and I'm employed by the Robertson and Damon Sporting Goods Shop."

The assistant district attorney

was whispering to the detectives involved in the case, probably asking them if they recognized me. I doubted any of them did, though I knew Detective Captain Keeley and Sergeant Talbot.

"Unless there is an objection from either the State or the defense," the judge said, "we'll let the witness be sworn."

"It's unusual," the assistant D.A. admitted, "but let's hear what he has to say."

The defense offered no objection as I'd already stated what I knew was in their favor. I stepped onto the witness stand and was sworn in.

The judge said, "This being rather unusual, I think we should proceed in like manner. Mr. Jennings, you may tell your story in your own way."

I'd never been a very important character and never wanted to be, but at this moment I was the most vital man in this courtroom and I rather enjoyed the spotlight.

"I shall be as brief as possible," I said. "May I say first of all, that until I came into this courtroom, I had never knowingly seen the defendant in my life. My part in this has been entirely passive until now. Four months ago, when the crime for which this defendant is now on trial took place, I awoke in the drunk tank at police headquarters."

A mass sigh went up from everybody in the courtroom and the interest in me began to drain out of all concerned, as I guessed it might.

I kept on talking as calmly as possible.

"It happens that I was not intoxicated. I was, rather, in a coma. I'm a diabetic. When I collapsed, the officer naturally thought I was drunk. He mistook the odor of acetone on my breath for that of alcohol, and sent me in. The odor of acetone is a symptom of diabetic coma. When I came to, I managed to convince the janitor that I was ill and he called a doctor who, in turn, sent me to the emergency room at general hospital by police ambulance. There my condition was confirmed and I was given emergency treatment."

"What has that to do with the trial now going on in this courtroom?" the judge asked.

"A great deal, Your Honor. From the evidence I heard here, and what I read in the newspapers, I know that Vincent Harker, the defendant, is charged with the murder of Patrolman McGuire during a burglary in which two men took part. One was Mr. Harker, the other was Mr. Travis, who has testified for the State. The murdered patrolman was shot twice in the chest. He was brought into the hospital and placed in the emergency room beside me, Your Honor. I was quite conscious, no more than five feet away so I could see and hear exactly what went on."

Captain Keeley suddenly began whispering to the assistant D.A., who jumped to his feet.

"Your Honor, the State wishes to recess in order that this man's story be confirmed . . ."

"It can be easily checked later," the judge said. "The jury is not involved in his testimony, so I think we'll hear it. When Mr. Jennings repeats his story for the benefit of the jury, you may then question him."

The assistant D.A. sat down, looking very worried. I received a nod from the judge to continue.

"The police officer was obviously dying. Your Honor, but he too was conscious. Before the doctors began to work on him. Captain Keeley over there, and Sergeant Talbot, brought in a man who was a stranger to me then, but I now recognize him as Mr. Travis, who testified for the State yesterday. Mr. Travis was handcuffed and looked as if he'd been roughed up somewhat. He was placed directly beside the table on which Officer McGuire lay and the officer lifted his head, looked squarely at Mr. Travis and pointed a finger at him.

"He had some difficulty raising his hand to do so, but he managed. Officer McGuire said, and I quote his few words verbatim, 'This is the man who shot me! I know I am going to die. This is the man who killed me!'"

I enjoyed watching their faces and listening to the excitement. The judge rapped for order and finally got it. He was sterner looking than ever.

"Proceeding along this strictly irregular course," he said, "I want to hear Captain Keeley and Sergeant Talbot refute this man's testimony before I let the jury hear it."

Captain Keeley came forward and stood before the bench. "Your Honor," he said, "what this witness has stated is essentially true. I admit it, but Patrolman McGuire was in great pain, dying rapidly and I doubt he was able to actually see Mr. Travis. He simply knew that Sergeant Talbot and I had brought a man into the emergency room and he must have assumed it was the killer."

"But the officer did identify Mr. Travis as the man who shot him?"

"Yes, Your Honor. It was impossible, however, for Travis to have committed the crime because when the murder shots were fired, Travis was being held bodily by a police officer some distance from the scene of the murder, as has been testified to."

"Your Honor," the assistant D.A. stepped forward, "I didn't know this, of course, but I can see Captain Keeley's point in not bringing it into evidence. All the testimony placed Mr. Travis some distance away from the crime, but places the defendant on the scene most definitely."

"I think," the judge said, "the jury should, nevertheless, hear this new evidence."

So it came about that the jury stayed out for two days, but finally

brought in a verdict of *not guilty*, based solely on the premise that a man must be found guilty beyond any doubt, and I had shed considerable on the case.

I was in court when the verdict was announced. The first person to reach me was Vincent Harker who, up to now, had most certainly been headed straight for the gas chamber,

"Thanks, pal," he said. "It takes a big man to step out and call the cops a bunch of liars. I appreciate it very much and if there is ever anything I can do for you, just name it. I owe you my life."

Captain Keeley gripped Harker by one arm. "It's not quite over, Harker. You're now under arrest for burglary."

Harker shrugged. "That's a bailable offense, Captain. Let's go."

"As for you," Keeley said to me in a cold voice, "I hope you sleep well, Mr. Jennings, even if you have just unleashed a monster."

"I beg your pardon . . ." I began, but Keeley led Harker away.

I walked out and nobody congratulated me. Even the members of the jury looked at me as if they wished I were on trial before them. But my conscience was clear. Not even the way the assistant D.A. tried to bully me when I testified in front of the jury, made any difference.

Naturally, since Captain Keeley and Sergeant Talbot had both admitted I told the precise truth, the assistant D.A. didn't get far. My evidence provided the reasonable



policeman a block away. Officer McGuire, still inside the store, continued his search and was shot. The detective said it was Harker, the dying patrolman had identified Travis. It had been the jury's duty to decide whom to believe.

If a monster, as Captain Keeley termed Harker, had been set free, that was the fault of the law and the police. Still, when I got home, I felt uneasy, as if something wasn't quite right. My apartment is a small two-room affair in a modern midtown hotel. I've lived there for twenty-one years and I like it. Surrounded by familiar objects and a sense of snug security, that feeling of uneasiness left me.

I rather expected a call from Captain Keeley and I wasn't disappointed. I even offered him a drink of sherry, which he declined with a snort.

"I dropped by to let you know exactly what you did, Jennings. Vince Harker has killed at least three men—not that we can prove it. When he shot Patrolman McGuire, we had him, until you horned in. Now, admit it, don't you actually know very well that McGuire made a mistake when he identified Travis?"

"Captain," I said, "I'm not concerned with any other testimony except that which I gave. In my opinion, I was obligated to come forward and detail what I heard and saw."

"Obligated by a sense of justice

doubt and Harker was freed, though he would still have to appear on a charge of burglary.

I read a resume of the case in the newspapers that night. Harker and Travis were partners in crime and had broken into Brownell's department store. Someone had seen a light in the store where it shouldn't be and called Officer McGuire. He was an old cop who'd never come up against anyone as desperate as Harker and Travis. He'd tried the back door, found it open and had gone in.

Convinced there were some boys pilfering merchandise, he'd called to them to come out. Travis had lost his nerve and fled through the front door, only to be stopped by another

or because you hate cops?" he asked bluntly.

His attitude and theory were both silly.

"I don't hate the police. I respect them," I said firmly.

"You'd been picked up on a drunk charge. You had a hard time convincing the police that you were sick, not drunk. You resented being locked up. Maybe you don't even realize it, mister, but that's what made you step forward and tell a story of a dying man's honest mistake, so that a dangerous criminal would be released. You were getting back at the cops, Mr. Jennings. If you weren't trying to make a grandstand play, you'd have come forward about this matter long before the trial was even begun."

He was an overpowering sort of man, huge in size, domineering in manner. Quite the sort I do not like.

"I'm certain, Captain Keeley," I said, "that you have no further business with me. Good evening."

He walked out and I set about ordering my dinner, for which I had very little appetite. Vincent Harker hadn't seemed like a monster to me, but even if I were certain he was, it would have made no difference. To me it was a matter of fair play, of honesty, and there were no personal reasons involved. I had never in my life been a vindictive man and I wasn't likely to begin being one now.

I had sensed a coolness at the store ever since I'd volunteered my

testimony. The Robertson and Damon Sporting Goods Company was not a retail firm dealing in toy baseball bats and cheap, imitation baseball gloves for boys. No indeed! We had been established for over a hundred years and we sold two hundred dollar fishing rods, golf equipment to addicts who never asked the cost and nationally known pros to whom we were glad to give discounts. We dealt in guns of fabulous manufacture and costly, as such fine merchandise had to be.

I was senior clerk. Mr. Sanders, the manager, had died suddenly four months ago and I'd already been asked to take his position. I'd tentatively turned down the offer for one specific reason. I didn't want the responsibility. I had a carefully cultivated clientele who wouldn't think of asking advice from anyone else, my commissions were good and I liked my work as it was—as a clerk. I didn't want to change.

Sam Beckwith had the inside track for the job and was pulling every string to get it. Paul Falk was pressing too. Either would make a good manager. It was of no special consequence to me whom they gave the job to. I was above taking a manager's orders. Everyone knew that.

So, when Mr. Falk began to adopt an attitude of coolness and Sam Beckwith came right out and said he thought I'd been all wrong in giving the testimony I had, I resented their attitudes.

Falk said, during a morning lull in business, "Jennings, in my opinion, the police were perfectly right in not mentioning that Patrolman McGuire made a wrong identification as he lay dying. It was so obviously a mistake, the introduction of such evidence would only have confused the issue."

"If the issue were clear in the first place," I said, "the introduction of that evidence wouldn't have hurt the police case against Harker."

"But see here," Sam Beckwith said, "the issue was clear. The evidence was enough to convict Harker fifty times. Good heavens, Jennings, Harker is an evil man. He isn't fit to be turned loose."

"He's a murderer," Sam added loudly. "That man Travis turned State's evidence against Harker and the police agreed to let him off. Harker must hate him. I think he'll kill him."

"An idiotic opinion," I said. I very suddenly didn't like either of them.

For four more days, right up to closing time on Saturday, they kept after me, insinuating that I had been instrumental in a very serious miscarriage of justice. I went home with a bad headache and no appetite except for aspirin, which didn't seem to cure my headache in the least.

Mr. Claude Robertson, the sole owner of the store and the last of the long line of family owners of the business, was always available

when I called. I sat alone in my apartment and my mind kept dwelling on Sam Beckwith's and Falk's insistence that I had done wrong. It was the cause of my headache and I was rightfully angry with them.

I was angry enough to pick up my phone and call Mr. Robertson and tell him I had changed my mind and I would be glad to take over as manager of the store and its hundred odd employees. No need to say that he was delighted and I felt much better than I hung up.

I had decided to discharge Sam Beckwith and Falk. The store was no place for people with such set and determined opinions. Inflexibility is a bad sign in a salesman and they were both very stubborn people.

All of a sudden my headache was gone and I had a ravenous appetite which I could satisfy merely by calling room service. I hadn't enjoyed food so much in a long time and I kept improvising the brief speeches I was going to make when I told Falk and Beckwith that I was now manager.

I decided to discharge them Monday afternoon, just before we closed up and do it in front of as many employees as possible. There'd be no argument with the exercise of my authority. They could appeal to Mr. Robertson all they liked and they'd get nowhere. In such matters, he trusted me implicitly.

I went to bed on a full stomach, without a headache, and I slept well. Sunday morning I was accustomed to putter around, but first I always brought in the morning newspapers from the hall.

The headlines were thick and black, and the name of Vince Harker was spread all across the front page. I closed the door with my foot and read the flash news on which the headlines were based. Vince Harker was barricaded in a farmhouse just outside the city and he had brought Travis there and was going to kill him.

The sinking feeling that enveloped me was as great as the elation with which I'd gone to bed the night before. I felt that this unexpected turn of events concerned me because I was, in a way, responsible for it. I telephoned Police Headquarters and asked for Captain Keeley, but he wasn't in.

Neither was Sergeant Talbot, and I had an idea they were up at the scene of the siege.

I skipped shaving for the first morning in more than ten years—the last time was the morning they'd done an appendectomy on me at the hospital. I prepared and administered my regular shot of insulin, however. I was knotting my tie as the elevator dropped me to the basement where I kept my car.

It was a trifle dusty because I didn't use it much, but the battery was strong and the motor turned over well.

I knew about where Harker was resisting the siege and I drove there. It took only half an hour and I ran into a road block. Stray bullets could easily whip through the area around the highway, so the police were detouring all traffic.

I explained who I was and why I was there. I told them Harker was free through my intercession and I wanted to do all I could to help stop any shooting.

Anyway it must have made sense to them because they let me through and even contacted Captain Keeley, by radio. He stopped me at the foot of a dirt road leading up to a knoll on which the farmhouse was built. All around it were wide open fields. No one could approach the place without becoming a perfect target.

"Well," Keeley said, "I don't know what you're doing here, but I'm glad you came. Take a good look at what you've accomplished, Mr. Jennings."

There were two ambulances off the highway. In one of them lay a policeman, wounded by Harker's gunfire, and being given emergency treatment by two doctors.

"That's Sergeant Anderson. He thought he could talk some sense to Harker and walked up the road toward the house. All he got was a bullet."

"Do I understand Harker has that man Travis with him?"

"Travis is undoubtedly dead by now. Harker kidnaped him last night

and brought him here. It's not likely he let him live."

"Mr. Harker has the means to resist all these policemen?" I asked. I could see at least twenty and I had an idea there were probably twenty others scattered about to keep the farmhouse surrounded.

"We know what he's got in that farmhouse," Keeley said. "He used to share it with a pal whom we picked up. That's how we knew where to find him."

"But with all these men—"

"Harker has fifty hand grenades up there, two machine guns, automatic carbines, pistols and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. Do you know what we're considering? Sending for the National Guard to bring up a tank. But we're afraid to take a chance and wait. Travis might still be alive."

"I see," That's all I could think of to say.

He gave me a look of utmost disgust. "You're responsible for it, Jennings. You and your considered opinion as to what constitutes the truth."

"I only did what I felt was the right thing," I said. It sounded lame to me and that was the first time I ever considered my arguments as anything but the strongest.

"Face up to it," Keeley said. "You were sore at us. At the police."

I said a very surprising thing. "Yes, I suppose I was, now that I

think of it. And yet, I was so sure that had nothing to do with it."

"Something must have changed your mind," he said. He picked up a bullhorn from the back of a car.

"Yes, something did," I agreed, and I was thinking that I'd also been angry at Sam Beckwith and Falk. That was why I'd accepted the managership of the store—so I could fire them. Certainly that was the act of a vindictive man.

"What are you going to do if you can't wait for reinforcements?" I asked.

"I can't see that's any business of yours, Jennings."

"If I'm responsible for all this, it certainly is my business, Captain. Do you think I could do any good if I went up there?"

"He'd kill you."

"I don't think so. He owes me something. He'd at least listen."

"Sure. And then he'd kill you. Harker is a dead man and he knows it, but he'll do all the damage he can before we finally finish him. Now you get into your car and move out of here, Jennings. Regardless of your responsibility, I don't want your murder on my conscience."

I was peering up at the sun-drenched hillside. "There seems to be a road down the back of the place, running right into the mountains."

"There is—and we have it covered. If he tries to head that way, he's done. Now get out of here. Go

home and let us take care of it."

"Very well," I said, "but I have a strong sense of conscience and guilt too, Captain; because I realize I did get Harker off because I was irked at the police. It was a mistake. I have a reputation for not letting mistakes lay around unrectified when I make them. Thank you."

I got back into my car, headed it into the road up to the farmhouse on the hilltop. The police, gathered near the car, got out of the way in anticipation of my backing up and heading for the highway. But I stepped on it instead and the car shot up the dirt road as fast as I dared drive along such a dangerous, rutted route.

I heard the police call out a command. Then Keeley was on the bullhorn, telling me to turn back. I kept on going until I was almost within gun range of the house. I knew guns and their ranges and I was still safe. I got out of the car and walked about ten yards up the road with my arms held high.

"Harker," I called at the top of my voice, "Harker, it's me—Jennings. I'm coming up. I have no weapons. I was on your side before. I am now."

Nothing happened, no warning bullet was fired. I climbed into the car and rolled it straight up to the house, expecting any moment that the windshield would shatter to bits just before a hail of machine gun bullets smacked into my head, or a

grenade came rolling down the hill. I could understand why the police were not anxious to charge the place.

I reached the vicinity of the house. Harker's voice came from one of the open windows. "Drive it around to the back, Jennings. You better be alone and not have a gun."

I drove around the house, got out and raised my hands again while I marched up to the back door. He flung it open, motioned me inside, closed the door quickly and put the muzzle of an automatic carbine against my chest.

"Face the wall, Jennings," he said. "Let's see if you're telling the truth."

I did as I was ordered and he searched me until he was satisfied I didn't have a nail-clipper on me. He lowered the gun and then pushed me toward the front of the house, where he had a sweeping view.

"Okay," he said, "what's the gag?"

"I intend to get you out of here," I said.

"Don't hand me that. The cops would have cut you to pieces if they figured that's why you came."

"They think I'm going to try and talk you into surrendering. They believe that you might trust me, seeing I got you out of the other scrape."

"I still don't get it."

"Harker, in my opinion—a be-

lated one, I grant—I made a grave error in setting you free. You may think I'm out of my mind, but I don't want anyone else killed. So I'm going to take you out. I know how to do it."

"You tell me," he said. I hadn't noticed before, what an ugly man he was, or how small and hard his eyes were.

"The police are sending for reinforcements. A tank, I might add. In the meantime, they can't cover every exit. They have the main back road blocked, but there's another they haven't been able to close yet. They figure you don't know about it, but I do."

"How? You're no country boy to know a place like this."

"They had maps and they were planning how to plug up every gap. I saw them. I know what I'm talking about."

"And what do you think will happen to you?"

"If you don't kill me," I said, "the police will probably lock me up for most of the remainder of my life."

"You're willing to take your chances on a setup like that?"

"I don't want anyone killed. I'd rather be killed, or spend my life in prison, than have another killing on my conscience."

"You know I got Travis up here?"

"Yes."

"Pal," he said with a tight smile, "you already got a killing on your

conscience. I took care of him last night. I dumped his body down the cellar steps."



"Travis more or less asked for this," I said. "I have no particular sympathy for him."

"Well," Harker said, "you're either the biggest screwball I ever met, or you'll really try to get me clear. I know I'm finished here. I can take a lot of cops with me, but I'd rather give myself another chance and pass up the police. You spell out how we do this, pal."

"It's quite simple. They still believe I'm arguing with you. I'll prove I'm all right by showing myself for a moment and waving. That's a signal you're at least listening to me. Then I'll go back into the house, right on through to where my car is parked. We'll start down the other side of this hill at top speed and veer off on a narrow road they haven't fully covered yet. Before they realize what's happened, we should be some distance away."

Jennings set aside the carbine and picked up a short-barreled machine gun. He stuffed four grenades into his pockets, stuck a Luger down under his belt.

"At least it's a chance," he said. "You realize if it's a trick, you get it first?"

"I'd hardly be here if I didn't know that," I said. "I told you before, I'm trying to save lives."

"Boy," he said, "you really were sore at the cops when you came forward and testified in my favor. I was a goner before you stood up in court."

Even he realized my reasons for

taking his side was my annoyance with the police. I guessed then, that perhaps the only person who hadn't realized my motives, was myself.

I walked out the front door and waved my arms frantically. There were no shots. I knew Keeley was watching me through binoculars. Harker was watching too, from one of the windows, with the machine gun aimed at my back.

I turned and walked slowly and deliberately into the house. Once the door closed, we both moved rapidly and went out the rear door. My car was parked so close that we could cover the distance from the door to the car without being readily seen.

"Lie down in back," I said. "If we're seen and they notice only me, they might hold their fire."

"Yeah," he said, "But boy, you're dead if you pull one stunt I don't like."

"You're dead anyway," I said, "so you'd better do as I suggest. Now I'm going to drive very fast—at breakneck speed, actually. When we make the turn onto the side road, it will be very sharp, so don't start shooting at me because you suspect a trick. There are no tricks, my friend."

"Move it out," he ordered sharply, and he crouched down out of sight.

I started the car, released the brake, stepped on it and the gears meshed rapidly into high and we were heading downhill, along the

road at the back of the farmhouse. I hadn't the faintest idea what the road was like. I knew of no side road such as I'd described. I knew only that I'd gotten Harker out of the farmhouse, away from his main cache of weapons.

I was hitting it up to sixty while the car swayed and rocked. I heard him yell something, but I didn't pay any attention. The tree was directly ahead. Off the road about fifty feet, but unobstructed and a fine target. There wasn't any other way.

"I'm going to turn off," I shouted above the racket of the engine. "Hang on!"

I guessed that fifty or a hundred yards ahead the police would be waiting for us. To keep going would be one form of suicide. I was deliberately choosing another.

Before Harker realized what I was up to, the car was headed straight for the tree. The rocky, wild turn I'd warned him about, I'd made and I suspected he was thrown off balance too much to do anything if he did raise his head and see what was going on.

I hit the massive tree trunk head-on. I would have had it no other way. I remember the tearing, grind-

ing sound of the crash and the shout from Harker which turned into a scream of terror. Then the air was knocked out of my lungs by what felt like a terrific punch in the stomach. A black curtain came down over the whole scene. It could have been a thousand years. Then:

Somebody said, "He may make it at that."

I could smell antiseptics, feel the hardness of a table I lay on and the tightness of the wide strap that held me down. There was no motion so I must be in a hospital, not an ambulance. There wasn't any pain.

"The other one, Harker, he got it. This guy was strapped in. Imagine that—strapping himself in before he rammed the tree."

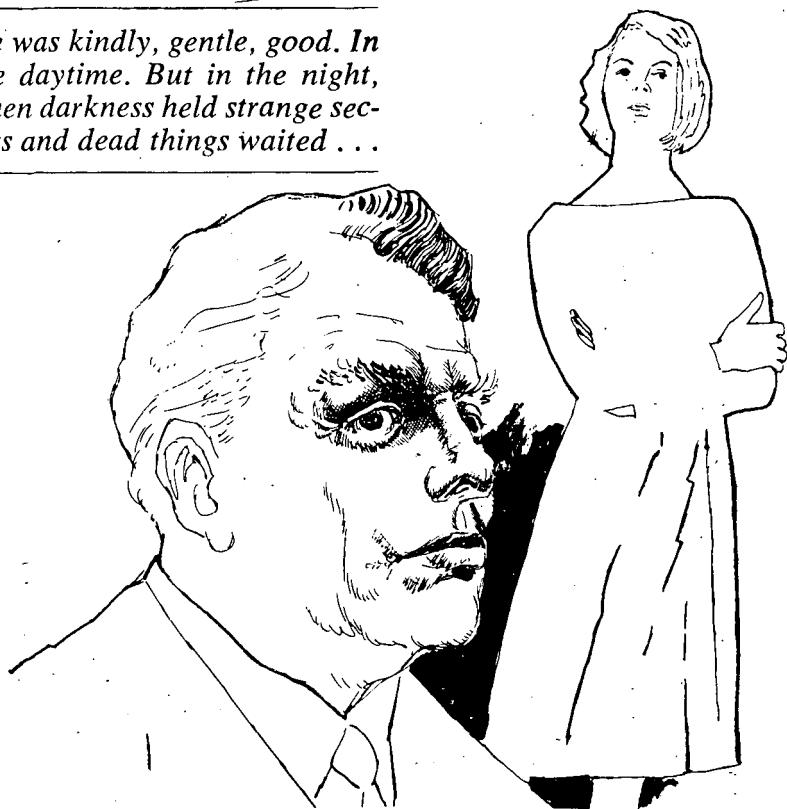
"He'll make it." It was Captain Keeley's voice. "He has to. I want to apologize to him."

I agreed with him. I had to make it because there was another result of my personal pique at people and things, that I had to set right. But in doing so, I'd have to choose between Falk and Sam Beckwith to be manager. It wasn't going to be easy, but thinking about it was a comfort and a pleasure.



COMING SOON: A NEW STORY BY NORMAN DANIELS

He was kindly, gentle, good. In the daytime. But in the night, when darkness held strange secrets and dead things waited . . .



THE PERFECT NEIGHBOR

by BILL WY WILSON

BEHIND THE marble top counter of the loan department were several desks identified by nameplates. One of these identified Harold S. Ramsey, vice-president in charge of home loans. The customer at his desk was Stuart Johnston, a

neighbor of Harold's on Maple Street.

"I appreciate this, Harold," Stuart said, as he signed the final papers for a \$4,000 home-improvement loan.

"Glad to do it, Stuart," Harold

said. "Neighbors have to help each other, you know."

Harold Ramsey was, in fact, lenient with loans to his neighbors, even though credit risks might be involved. But his respected position in the bank made him responsible only to the twice-a-year auditors from the bigger city forty miles away. And Harold's record was good; he had never had a loan default by any of his neighbors.

More than one neighbor had said: "Harold Ramsey is my idea of what the perfect banker should be."

And if bankers are supposed to look like bankers, then Harold was that model. He was tall and erect with a trim figure and greying temples, used rimless glasses for checking figures, and regularly wore a vest to work.

Now Stuart Johnston, check in hand, stood up.

"Stop by later for a drink," he said.

"Sure thing, Stuart," Harold said and immediately turned to other paper work on his desk, his left index finger nervously flicking at his eye.

Harold and Doris Ramsey lived on a street with maple trees, neat lawns, and large older homes. They had been married eighteen years, five of them on this street. The only children in the house were a fluffy brown dog, appropriately named Fluff, and a large black cat. The cat had only one eye; the other one had been lost one night at

wherever that mysterious place is that cats go to prowl.

Fluff, too, had an imperfection; recently she'd been hit by a car, and a mangled back leg had to be amputated. But Fluff was nevertheless still adept at digging holes in the back yard, much to the irritation of Doris Ramsey, whose hobby was gardening.

Doris was an attractive blonde of forty-six, who had a slender dieted figure, snappy green eyes and a ready smile. She worked in a stationery store, only a few doors from the bank. She and Harold had lunch together every day, usually with friends, who regarded them as the perfect middle-aged couple.

The Ramseys, like their neighbors, took pride in their home and garden. Recently they'd had their kitchen remodeled, and everyone had come over for a kitchen warming. While the women stayed inside to exclaim over the new built-ins, the men wandered into the backyard.

"Right here is where the patio's going," Harold said. "I'm certainly looking forward to it."

"When do they start work?" Charlie Stoddard asked. Charlie lived next door. He and the Ramseys shared rides to work.

"Next week," Harold said. Evidently Harold was as lenient with home-improvement loans for himself as he was with his friends and neighbors.

In Harold's large garage there

was one of the most complete workshops in the neighborhood. Harold was generous in lending these tools to his neighbors. Furthermore, he didn't mind helping them with plans for home improvements or new garden designs. Florence Johnston, who lived across the street, and whose husband Stuart wasn't much of a gardener or fix-it man, often borrowed tools from Harold.

"Harold, you're a perfect dear," she once told him. "My yellow roses wouldn't be half as nice if it weren't for you, and if I win a prize at the fair, I'll split it with you."

Harold did win a prize, of sorts. His neighbors nominated him for county supervisor. Charlie Stoddard, who was water commissioner and a man of some influence, was his campaign manager.

"Harold Ramsey is an outstanding citizen and candidate," Charlie was proud to announce. "And, in fact, I think he is the perfect candidate."

Early Monday morning Charlie backed his car out of the driveway. Promptly at 8:10 Harold came out of his house, alone. When he got into the car he said, "Doris is flying to Oregon today. We got a phone call late last night that her mother had another heart attack."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Charlie said. He started the car forward. Just then a pickup stopped.

"They're starting work today on the patio," Harold said.

"Good," Charlie said, "maybe they'll finish by the time Doris gets back."

"I hope so," Harold said. "She'd like that."

That evening when they drove into the driveway, Charlie said, "There's no use you eating alone in that big house. Come on over later for a couple of drinks and dinner."

"I'd appreciate that," Harold said. "I'll change and be over shortly."

And so that's how the week went, with first one neighbor then another, concerned about Harold's loneliness, having him over for drinks and dinner.

On Friday night Harold announced that Saturday night's food and drinks would be on him. They could initiate the new patio and barbecue pit, and, furthermore, he hoped Doris would be home.

Saturday night was a pleasant Indian summer evening. The catered food was delicious, the liquor was plentiful, and the new patio was perfect for dancing under a full moon. When Florence Johnston danced with Harold she said, "I'm sorry Doris didn't make it home."

"As a matter of fact," Harold said, "I expect her tomorrow."

"Good," Florence said. "I think I miss her as much as anyone."

When the party was over, Florence and Stuart were the last to leave.

"It was lovely," Florence said.



She smiled. "You were the perfect host. We'll see you tomorrow."

"Thanks," Harold said. "Good night."

In the morning Florence, working in her front yard, noticed a car with a county seal stop at the Ramseys. Three men went into the house.

Florence smiled. Evidently Harold was getting some additional help in his campaign for supervisor. Just then her husband called her to the phone. When she answered it, Wilma Cummings, her neighbor two doors away, spoke to her in a fast and excited voice.

"Have you heard the rumors flying around? They say that Doris didn't get to her mother's at all, that maybe, well, Harold does have access to lots of money. They think that maybe—"

"Wilma, will you take it easy? What are you trying—"

Wilma hardly drew a breath. "That maybe Doris is waiting for him some place with a lot of money. I mean, after all—"

"Wilma, stop it!"

Wilma rattled on. "And another thing, I know for a fact that Fluff has been missing since the day Doris left. Doris loved that dog. If she was coming back, why would she take—"

"Wilma!" Florence cut in, "I'm not listening to one more word of this. If you can make sense later, I'll talk to you. Right now I'm hanging up." And she did.

"What was that all about?" her husband asked.

"Oh, Wilma and some nonsense about the Ramseys. I swear, that woman." And Florence went back to her gardening. She now noticed that some neighbors had drifted down the block.

They stood in twos and threes, gesturing toward the Ramsey house and talking almost in whispers. A pick-up truck was now parked behind the county car. What was going on? Florence wondered, and she walked across the street.

Inside the Ramsey front room Harold sat on the sofa, his index finger flicking at his left eye. The sheriff paced back and forth, agitated and embarrassed, because Harold had, in fact, recently arranged for the mortgage on the sheriff's new home.

"I have to do this, Harold," the sheriff said. "You understand that. We get anonymous phone calls. Maybe they're crank calls, but we check 'em out, that's routine. So what if a man does dig around in his backyard; but in the middle of the night? And so a couple of phone calls tell us that your wife never did get to Oregon. And so we wonder about the rumors we hear, about money, or about—"

The sheriff stopped by a window that looked out on the new patio. Abruptly he spun back to Harold. "What about it, Harold?"

Harold said nothing. Then suddenly the racket started in the backyard; jack hammers cracking into cement. The sheriff nodded to a deputy and he walked into the backyard. Before long there were piles of cement scattered around the patio area. And now the men went to work with shovels.

In a few minutes one of the men said, "Here's something." They dug with their hands, then abruptly stopped. The deputy bent down. "What the hell is it?"

In a few minutes the deputy came into the house, carrying what they found. Harold stood up. The sheriff looked at the object, his eyes narrowing. "Isn't this your dog, Harold?"

Harold nodded. "She was old. She died suddenly one night." He shrugged. "That seemed like a good place to bury her."

In front of the house a taxi

stopped. Doris Ramsey got out. The neighbors crowded around. Florence said, "Doris, we thought you, well, we thought that—"

"What's going on?" Doris said. She seemed very upset. "Has something happened to Harold?"

She crowded her way through the neighbors and rushed excitedly into the house.

"Mrs. Ramsey!" the sheriff said. "We were just — I mean — " He looked out toward the patio, then back to the faces in the room.

"Oh boy!" he said, "some mess. We'll clear out of here right away, Harold."

And within minutes the sheriff and his deputies were gone, asking the neighbors to please go home, that there had been enough confusion for one day.

Later that night Doris put some milk out for the cat, then, with lights still burning in the house and the television set on, she and Harold went out a side door and got into their car. Forty-five minutes later they were at the Metropolitan Airport. In the morning they were in Argentina at a swank hotel in Buenos Aires.

As soon as they were alone in their plush suite, Harold threw a suitcase on the bed and opened it. He and Doris stood side by side looking down at \$250,000 wrapped in new bank wrappers.

Harold smiled. "I ask you," he said, "was that the perfect crime, or wasn't it?"

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